Australians at War Film Archive

Gilbert Tippett (Tip) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:40 **Going back to your childhood, can you tell us where you were born and where you grew up?**

Yes, well I was born at Waubra.

01:00 My parent's home was called St Mary's. There was a little mound on the property, St Mary's Mound. Waubra is about 20 to 25 miles north west of Ballarat. I was born in 1910, and my father had

01:30 been thrown off his pony going to school and broke his hip and the best the medical profession could do in those days was operate on him and scrape it, and it shortened his life no end. And he died in 1914, so before I was four years old. And I had a younger sister, so my mother…

02:00 And the farm actually belonged to Tippett Brothers. My father was a member of Tippett Brothers. My grandfather had six sons and in those days, you used to, on the farm, at Scrum Hill at Newland, that you worked them but you didn't pay them. But when they started to get married, he got into a lot of trouble. And so they formed themselves

02:30 into Tippett Brothers, and they, and he leased them the land and they had to pay the lease twice a year. And one of my uncles met a Dave Ronaldson who was an engineer in Ballarat, had started up an engineering at Ballarat and my uncle went in with him to get some experience

03:00 in the wintertime, so as to build a decent workshop on the farm at Scrum Hill. But he didn't get back to Scrum Hill, he became a partner of Ronaldson Brothers and Tippett. And he got a loan of 800 dollars from my grandfather, which was a great achievement, but he lent it to Tippett Brothers.

03:30 And the farm that I was born on belonged to Tippett Brothers, and after father's death of course, there was a great settling up. There was probate to pay and all sorts of things. And Mother eventually had the farm and it was leased, and we went to my eldest uncle,

04:00 Gilbert Tippett at Dean, and he had a farm there and I went to, I must have been about five or six when I went to the Dean school, and started school there. My mother's parents were, my mother's parents were Smiths and they were refugees to Middle Park, and they lived not far down the street here and they weren't too well.

04:30 And Mother and my sister and I used to come down here occasionally, and I was at the Middle Park school in 1918, in November when armistice was signed. And my sister, she started at school at Dean too so we must have been going backwards and forwards. And eventually we came and lived permanently

05:00 down at 164 Mills Street, which is in Albert Park, I mean Middle Park, it's Albert Park on one side of the street and Middle Park on the other. And I went to the Middle Park school here and I think I was in the infants for a start and then we came back I think, and I was probably in the third or fourth grade, and my sister and I

05:30 we went to the school here. Then both my grandparents died when we were with them. And I went to the South Melbourne Tech for a couple of years and by that time my sister had got to the sixth grade and we moved to Ballarat and I went to the School of Mines at Ballarat for two years,

06:00 and my sister went to Clarendon College, and I did agricultural engineering at Ballarat. I was talking to a man last night and I said that I studied agricultural engineering and he said, "With Professor Vasey who…?" And I said, "No, I did it before he invented it." And then when I finished school there

06:30 I went with my uncle at Dean, Gilbert Tippett, he had three daughters that were cousins of mine of course, and they were I think, the youngest of them was 10 years older than I was, but we had been backwards and forwards in their home, and they were more like sisters than cousins. And

07:00 I was there with my uncle for seven years and all through the 1930's depression and we saw a lot of hard times in those days. And then, the country, when I went to Dean, in about 1927,

07:30 I realised that a lot of the country, although it was chocolate, good volcanic chocolate soil, was the farms, about a third of the farms in Dean had just about had it. There was one man, he, used to mix rye, corn with his oats to try and get it up high enough

08:00 so that he could cut it with the reaper and bind it to feed his horses. And I eventually got a farm that had been run down in this manner and in 1924 my Uncle Gil bought the first subterranean clover that was, and now, and sowed that in the paddocks.

08:30 Well by the time, in the 1930's it was well known that if you sowed subterranean clover and top dressed it with super phosphate, you would rejuvenate that country. That was, it was crop sick. Now that country, some of my cousins still have that country in there, and I could take you to the paddock where the chap

09:00 couldn't get his oats up high enough to, and it's one of the top potato growing and cereals and fattening lambs, in the district now. Well then I had the place for about three years, no five years on my own, and by that time war broke out. And there was a chap in the district

09:30 who wasn't very keen to go to the war because of his inheritance and his religious belief, and he came and made me a very lucrative offer for the property that I had, and so I sold it to him and eventually joined the air force. And

10:00 when I was, I had a clearing sale that, and it was sometime before I was called up by the air force. I had enlisted but they, quite a while before I was called up and while I was waiting I made a gas producer for the car.

10:30 A 44 gallon drum on the back of the car and two 12 gallon drums in front. The 44 gallon drum was the producer it had a twier in it and put the charcoal in that and a pipe up to these other drums up in the front for cleaners and, oh this thing worked fairly well as some

11:00 funny things. Well then when I was called up, I left that with, at my uncles, and when I was first called up, I did three months technical training at the RMIT, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and

11:30 lived in the Exhibition buildings in Melbourne for three months. And when the final exam was on, I didn't feel too well that day, and the next day I reported sick and the medical officer said to me, "You've got mumps." And sent me out to the showgrounds,

12:00 to the infectious diseases hospital which was number one horse pavilion out at the Melbourne showgrounds. I could have got quite a lot of diseases there that were a lot worse than the mumps. But then when I finished they threw me out of the hospital, they put me into a course of fitter and DMT [Driver Motor transport].

12:30 That was fitter driver motor transport and I was there and did the course and then I was in the workshop there and driving, and did a certain amount of driving, you know. And it was great fun to get an ambulance and taking doctors and nurses to the Spencer Street station from the show grounds and turning on all

13:00 the, all the things. Oh it was a good.

Well Gilbert, do you mind if we go back and find out a little bit more about your years at Waubra and your farm? It would be good to get a bit more detail about that, like your childhood, the things you were interested in as a child. Also you were living on the farm but coming down to Middle Park,

13:30 **so you were going to both a rural school and a city school, was that right?**

Yes, yes and the other thing was that my sister and I spent all our holidays with my Uncle Gil at Dean, we never went anywhere else. During the 8 or 10 years we were down at Melbourne we spent all our holidays up there.

14:00 **So what would you do during the school holidays, what sort of activities?**

Oh well, I've got one finger that's a bit, that I put through a cog in a header. My uncles, or my grandfather, when he came out from Cornwall, he and a man from, Mr Dougdale from Myrniong, used to argue the point

14:30 as to which one of them it was that had twice the capital that the other one had, one had a shilling the other one only had a sixpence. But my grandfather, he worked for his cousins, or he worked down at, we've never been able to find out how he got here.

15:00 But quite a few of us have tackled this and you know, gone through the shipping lists and we've got the date of when he landed but we never, whether he worked his passage and jumped ship or what, we don't know. But he landed at, down there at Queenscliff, down there on the peninsula and

15:30 worked there for a short time, then he went up to Dean. That his cousins, the Trethowans had selected the property there and then he worked for them and then he bought a threshing machine and a steam engine. They were portable in those days, you know. You had a team of horses or bullocks to pull the thresher and another team to pull the engine. And

16:00 he eventually had three of these threshing machines, and he was married to my grandmother of course, and she was, she came out to Australia, and was nine months old when her parents arrived in Australia, and we've got the shipping list of them, that they were

16:30 listed as being on a farm, from a farm. He was a farm labourer, he was Protestant, he was literate, so was his wife, and they got 19 dollars bounty to leave Cornwall. And, but Grandma, she was listed on the top

17:00 as nine months old, illiterate. It was terrible about Grandma being illiterate at nine months old. Well then, the Trethowans sold Grandfather, my grandfather the property and then he bought another piece that was adjoining it, from a man, Thomas Talon. And

17:30 there were Talons, there were other Talons that were neighbours, and there was a man giving a lecture one night at the Royal Society, he was a geologist, and I said to him, and his name was Talon, and I said to him did he have any relations in Ballarat or any connections in Ballarat. And he said, "Oh, out at Dean." He said, "My grandfather was Thomas Talon."

18:00 And he was the man that had sold the block of land that my grandfather had, that the cousins have still go it. And then my grandfather must have financed fairly heavily with his cousins, the Trethowans, and he had a, he had a mortgage with the Trethowans of 10 percent, he was paying 10 percent

18:30 interest on it for 10 years. And the story used to go that the Trethowans always thought they'd get the farm back, this is in, like in our family. Well we had a family reunion some time ago and there was a lot of the Trethowans there and they said, "You know we always thought we'd get the farm back." But Grandfather had to sell

19:00 two of the threshing machines one year to maintain his interest and it was also, in the agreement that he had signed that he had to pay a 10 percent interest for 10 years which meant that he paid twice as much than he'd bargained for. But he had had no

19:30 education whatsoever and being a Cornish boy, of course he went working in the mines when he was about 8 or 10 years old.

Why did he have three threshing machines?

Well, he had three, well a man who had no education to run three threshing machines, oh there were 15 or

20:00 20 men employed on these things. And how he kept… although he had no education, my uncle said that, told me one time that his father would send one of them off to Ballarat, they were 16 miles from Ballarat, send one of them off to Ballarat with a load of grain, and when they would come back, he would say to them, "How much

20:30 did it weigh? How much did you get for it? Your cheque will be so and so." And they tried to find out you know, how he did this but the only answer that he got was that he'd spent a lot of money on them going to the Creswick Grammar School and they couldn't work it out. And when he formed, when they formed Tippett Brothers,

21:00 and of course they had the working of the property, but he still told them what he thought they should do. And in those days of course, they had progressed to the two furrow plough, and two furrow ploughs were a maximum that a man could lift out of the ground to turn it around to go back the other way, and it wasn't

21:30 until the multiple lift were invented that you could have more than two furrows. And for years they used these two furrow ploughs and my Uncle Gil, being the eldest of the family, of course he had the pick of the horses so he had the best horses. And he had a new pair of boots one time and he had, there was no seat on the plough on those days and he got a

22:00 sore foot and so he got a piece of board and he put it over one beam and under the other and he used to sit on this board. And anyway, his father came along and saw him doing this and gave him a terrible lecture, took the board and threw it up the paddock but when he got out of sight my uncle retrieved the board again, didn't think he'd be back.

22:30 **You would have been close to the goldfields up there, at Ballarat, Dean, you were close to the goldfields?**

Goldfields, yes well I don't think Grandfather ever did any mining in Australia although he was from a mining family but he was 21 when he came to Australia, but before that he and his father and another brother had been to America mining.

23:00 And his brother was killed in a mine and I don't think either he or his father ever mined after that. And he never went mining, but on my mother's side, they were Anderson's, like her grandparents were Andersons, and they came to Adelaide in 1851. And my grandmother was born not long after they

23:30 arrived in Adelaide so we always thought well, Great Grandma could have had a pretty rough trip out on a sailing ship. And this was the grandmother that I lived with down here in Middle Park. And, but they, we went looking for their history, my mother had a great knowledge of family history,

24:00 but, after her death, one of my cousins said, you know, we ought to write down what your mother knew. So we got at it and, you know, weren't sure of some things and asked some of our cousins and they said, oh you know, you should have asked so and so but they were dead, but we eventually put a screed together and showed it to some of our older cousins, and they said, "Oh

24:30 No, that's not right." And that's how we got quite a bit of history. But the Andersons, then we got onto their history and they were, met up with somebody at Castlemaine and this woman said, "Oh no, she didn't have anything historic, anything of much interest."

25:00 But she said she had one letter, and it seemed they were in Castlemaine mining, two years after they'd landed in Adelaide. How they got to Castlemaine I don't know, but my grandmother's brother, who was the next in the family, who was about two years younger than she was, and he was born in Williamstown, and

25:30 we've got no record of where they travelled, but in this letter they said the gold was easy to get, you could pick it up in handfuls at Castlemaine, by the time they'd got there, so they must have got there fairly early.

Did you go gold panning?

No, I never went gold mining. I'll tell you the reason why.

26:00 **Tell me.**

No, what happened was that the Andersons lost a lot of money gold mining. And probably they, when they left Castlemaine they came to Melbourne and from Melbourne they went to Dean and they landed at Dean in 1855 or 6, I think it was, and

26:30 it was a forest, all that chocolate volcanic soil was a forest, or beautiful trees, so they set up a sawmill. And the first sawmill they set up was down at Wattle Flat and Mother used to say that that sawmill was a pit saw and so I got, eventually

27:00 found a map at one of the departments saying that the Anderson's mill down there was a steam driven mill. And so I said to some of my friends, "But Mother always said it was a pit saw." And they said, "Well they would have been working the old Scottish saws, they were vertical." The saws were worked with the steam cylinder vertically

27:30 before the circular saw was invented. But then they moved from Wattle Flat to Dean and then from Dean to Barkstead, and at Barkstead they had three saws working in the sawmill up there. And they built a tramline of 14 miles to shift the, to bring the timber into the mill and to bring

28:00 the sawn timber down to Dean. And it was sold at Dean and my great grandfather was the man that was selling it. And my Grandfather Smith was the same age as my grandmother and he became the, he was the boy about the place, selling the, when they were selling the timber.

28:30 But the sawmill at Barkstead, there was quite an industry there. There was six Anderson boys came from….

Just wait for the clock to finish.

And

29:00 the six Anderson boys, three of them came out for a start and then a couple of years afterwards, their mother and the other three boys came out. And their sister was still in Scotland and she was a Mrs Smith, and her two sons came out to work for their uncles and

29:30 one of them worked in the, was in charge of the workshop at Barkstead, and they converted a portable steam engine into a locomotive. And they drove it with a chain and they made the chain themselves in Barkstead and they case hardened it. And to case harden it you had to put the things in a box

30:00 with old bones and old leather and things in it, and they had to be kept at a constant temperature. And they had people working on the forge keeping this at the constant temperature, day and night. I don't know how long it lasted but some of the Smith boys in my generation or younger have still got some of these links

30:30 that were made up there at Rockland. But when they, they selected land and they went to, one of them went to Smeaton, and then they decided to go in for, they built a flour mill at Smeaton. And the flour mill is still there and it was worked with a water wheel

31:00 and the water wheel weighed 100 tons and it was caste in Ballarat. And they were a going concern there and the other Smith boy he was, he had charge of the works up at the flour mill and he also,

31:30 they were very interested in the mining in that district. And they, I think that they might have got onto, you know, helping the mines a lot, financially. And when the 1890's depression came on they lost their country and they still saved

32:00 the flour mill but that was about the only thing they saved. They had grazing country and they were interested in mines and they had some good land at Dean. And they'd, one of them had studied veterinary science at the Edinburgh University and the other ones had all had a fair education.

32:30 But when they crashed, my Grandpa Tippett, who had no education, bought a big lump of their land and that's how some of the family have still got the land. Now my Uncle Gil's wife, was my grandmother's second youngest daughter, so my mother

33:00 was originally a niece of my Uncle Gil and Aunt's, but then when she married my uncle's youngest, second youngest son, she became the, it was our cousins, first of all she was their cousin and then she was their aunt. These are the cousins we lived with a lot.

So when you moved

33:30 **down here to Middle Park. Did your father come down here with you or did he stay on the farm?**

No, he had died when I was four years old.

Oh that's right. And your mother, she was a widow for the rest of her life. So you went to primary school here, which high school did you go to?

I didn't go to a high school, I went to the

34:00 South Melbourne Tech, which they're pulling down now because they're going to make a swimming pool there. And then I went to the School of Mines in Ballarat.

Right can you tell me what you studied at South Melbourne Tech? What subjects did you do there?

I had a sort of a funny education at South Melbourne Tech, because the principal of

34:30 the Middle Park school here, was a higher elementary school, and the principal of the higher elementary part of it, he took great exception to some of us going to the tech. Because he thought we were just wasting our talents going there, we should have been studying his subjects at the high school

35:00 instead of studying at the tech of course. We did carpentry and plumbing and turning and fitting and we did algebra and some English, and engineering drawing, and when I went there, I

35:30 must have gone there with some of the boys that, you know, probably the first 8 or 10 in the sixth grade. And after the first term, it was a three year course, well after the first term, we were put with chaps who had done, gone to the eighth grade before they came to the tech, which put my English and some subjects

36:00 very much in the doldrums. But I'll always tell my cousins that most, they all went to college and one thing or another, but I'm the only one that didn't go to a college and I'm the only one that writes letters to the papers. Must be my ignorance that allows me to do that.

36:30 **So at the School of Mines at Ballarat, what did you study there?**

Well at the School of Mines at Ballarat, it was a two year course and the principal tried his level best to, get, to get me to do mining, because he was an old mining engineer and he'd been to the First World War, and he was quite a character.

37:00 But having seen what happened to the family, to the Anderson part of the family, I wasn't too keen to go mining. I wanted to go farming. And there were only four of us that were in the course. It was the second year that the course had been going and we did blacksmithing, turning and fitting,

37:30 carpentry, plumbing, electrical engineering, book keeping, surveying, engineering drawing, and heat engines, and chemistry one and

38:00 chemistry two. You shouldn't do chemistry two until you've been there about three years. But, there was an instructor there, two instructors in the chemistry. And an instructor there, he took us on, and gave us the chemistry of the manufacturing of cheese and

38:30 what you should do with butter and fertilizers, the super phosphate and the nitrogen fertilizers. And although we shouldn't have been doing that at that time, we did get the ABC of it, and the other chemistry, that

39:00 first year chemistry, Dr Powell was quite an old character and he had a bottle without a bottom, it was a, you know, a soft drink bottle you couldn't stand up, they were very strong bottles. And he set up an electrolysis set up and it was generating oxygen on one side and hydrogen on the other and so he put a drop of hydrogen in it and a drop of oxygen in it.

39:30 And we were all taking notes, he used to have notes and things, and we were all taking notes and then he'd walk past a bunsen burner with this thing and a tremendous explosion so… Always been interested ever since, to make my fuel for an internal combustion engine out of water. And for many years I belonged to the hydrogen society, the international hydrogen society. But the trouble with hydrogen is

40:00 that it doesn't matter, you can do all these wonderful things with it but you can't store it, it gets out. It'll get out of steel, plastic and that, they have terrible troubles but, there is work going on, you could, you couldn't run a car more than about 100 k. You couldn't carry enough hydrogen

40:30 to run it, but there are things that are developing now. I gave up the membership of the hydrogen society because it was a, it was a 19 dollar fee and when our thing was down, when our dollar was down low and you had to pay it in US dollars, it was 180 dollars,

41:00 and I'd been at it for, oh, 10 or 15 years, and I reckon that they weren't getting anywhere so I gave them up about two years ago.

Tape 2

00:32 **About your interest in hydrogen… but I'm curious about the gas car that you built on the farm.**

The gas producer. Oh no, that was, that made… you used charcoal, you filled it up with

01:00 charcoal, and it had a twier. A twier was the thing that a blacksmith had where his fire, it blew the fire, you blew the air into and so the suction of the engine burnt the charcoal. And the charcoal, of course when things burn, when carbon burns it's carbon dioxide but

01:30 when the carbon in a gas producer, the fire is carbon dioxide, then it's drawn up through the hot coal, the hot charcoal and becomes carbon monoxide. And the carbon monoxide is the gas you use in the engine and you explode that and it becomes carbon dioxide again and

02:00 that's where you get the power. And I always thought if we run out of power, we'll go back to the gas producers.

So was it mounted on a vehicle, was it used to drive a vehicle?

Yeah, I had a 44 gallon drum. I went into a chap in Ballarat that had a workshop and he had electric welders and an oxyacetylene welder.

02:30 And I was making this thing and I'd drawn it out on a piece of brown paper or something and there were quite a few, there was quite an interest in it. CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation] had done some work on it, and I had that, the 44 gallon drum went on the back of the Hillman car that I had. I was able to, you know,

03:00 weld it up underneath and it was on the back and I filled it with charcoal, and the lid was screwed. I made the lid and you screwed it down. And then there was a cyclone, made a cyclone to cyclone cleaner to take the rough gas out and then the gas out of that went in a pipe up to the front of the car,

03:30 and there were the two drums there and they, I put wood in them. And the gas went up through them, and one, and down, and up through the second one and into the engine. And I had to alter the engine, the carburettor. I had to put a pipe in so that you could either run it on gas or

04:00 you had to start it on petrol so as to get the gas to work. And I had two accelerators you see, one for gas and one for petrol, you see, and you'd have the petrol one going and you'd pull that off and try the gas one to see which one, and then when the gas one was going away you went. Eventually when I was up in Darwin, I'll tell you more about that later on.

04:30 **Yeah, we'll get to that a bit later.**

It was a very, but there were a lot of those, people used to curse them you know, but they weren't nearly as good as petrol or kerosene. Some people, you could buy kerosene but you had to have a special licence to buy petrol during the war, it was

05:00 restricted very severely. But there was, somebody gave us a recipe of how to treat your kerosene so that it didn't make it smell like kerosene when you were driving it. You put the kerosene in a 44 gallon drum, you cut the top out of it and put the kerosene in there, then you put so much lime in it, then you stirred that up

05:30 and then let the lime settle and the kerosene wouldn't smell, didn't smell like kerosene.

Why did you want to disguise the smell of the kerosene?

Well because you'd get into trouble, you'd have the police after you if they could smell kerosene coming out of your car, the exhaust. The exhaust of your car was running untreated kerosene, you could smell them coming.

06:00 **So, you did two years at the School of Mines, so you must have learnt, did you learn a lot there?**

We did, we were introduced to all these, these skills, at the School of Mines, but we didn't graduate in any one of them. But it gave us a wonderful

06:30 knowledge that if we wanted to go further, we could go and find somebody that knew what, you know, knew more about it. And it gives me, I still work on that theory that if I'm looking for anything I'll find somebody that really knows about it and you can get to the bottom of most things. And that way….

So what did you,

07:00 **when you completed the two years, and you graduated, what did you make up your mind that you wanted to do?**

Oh well, I was only going to go farming at any rate. And of course, I went, I was seven years that I spent with my uncle. We were farming with horses, tractors hadn't come in then and they had, there were a few about, but

07:30 we, but then when I went on my own, I got a tractor and one of the early tractors. And the country that I'd take up, it was full of weeds and thistles. There was a Californian thistle there, they were a terrible thing. And I was up at Sydney Show with my uncles, we used to show cattle, that was one of my jobs was to,

08:00 was to look after cattle and showing them at Melbourne, and I took them to Sydney one year. My uncle, my younger uncle, he had taken cattle to Brisbane at times and we use to have great times at the shows. And I had a lot of great friends that I met through that but most of them are no more,

08:30 I can't find them. But the horses of course, they were, people say, oh you know, beautiful things these Clydesdale horses, and I said, "Yes they're just like people." They're temperamental. Some of them have got good tempers and some of them are the very opposite.

09:00 There was a chap out from Scotland and he used to shoe the horses and I used to make the shoes because I was a fairly miserable kid. That, my mother used to say when we were living down here in Melbourne, that there was no need to go to India to get a photo like that. They used to have photos of miserable kids you know,

09:30 barracking for donations, but it was quite a few years before they found out what was wrong with me. My father of course, used to have to go and be operated on every now and again, and one of these specialists thought that my tonsils should have some treatment you see, so he cut them in half. And that was the treatment

10:00 of, or it must have been before I was three years old because father died shortly after I was three. And it wasn't until I was about eight or ten years old, I suppose, that Mother found out that these tonsils were badly infected and it was, oh it pulled my health back no end. And there was another chap and

10:30 he rooted them out and I've got to be careful still how I swallow because food will get into a, into one of the holes that he left when he pulled the crook tonsil out. And then, I was so small when I was at the School of Mines that I used to have a

11:00 gelignite case to stand on to work at the vice, the turning and fitting. I used to get a lot of barracking about that of course. And while we were there it was a great tradition at the School of Mines that they, they had a cannon and you know, if there was anybody, they used to run a

11:30 school procession and of course the paper would take this procession to pieces for terrible things that they had in this procession. Those in the chemistry department used to make bad smells and all sorts of things. And before I was there they had this cannon and they used to, of course when the paper said terrible things about them, they took it down to Sturt Street and

12:00 charged it up and fired it at the front of the newspaper office. And then when I was at the School of Mines, South Melbourne Tech, there was a chap there, and he had, all the side of his face had been badly burnt and he had one arm. It was a scientific experiment that went wrong, and when I went up the School of Mines,

12:30 talking to the blacksmithing instructor who knew most things that happened at the school and he said, "Oh, scientific experiment." he said. "Silly fellow," he said, "They were loading the cannon up one time and instead of getting the caretakers broom to ram the stuff." It was a muzzle loading cannon. "But he got an iron bar and the thing had exploded." So that was what had happened to him.

13:00 So the cannon had been filled up with concrete when I got there, and they thought well, we'll have to do something about Guy Fawkes night, and so a couple of us, we made, we found a piece of steel, and oh, a bit of iron I think it was, and forged it in the blacksmith shop and then turned it

13:30 in the turning and fitting shop. And it had a 12 gauge, there was a 12 gauge punch and we could cut old leather up and we had this thing, and had it for Guy Fawkes night. Well the turning and fitting instructor he was, he knew what was going on, and so did the blacksmith man. And so we had it just about

14:00 ready for Guy Fawkes and got some powder and a stick, and so the turning and fitting instructor said, "You better leave the stick in it and see how far it will shoot." And it went across, there was, we were there late after school and it went across to a building over the other side, and put a pine stick into a hard wood door.

14:30 And then the registrar secretary of the school, and he must have heard this, and so rang the police. He knew it'd be on, and there was a chap doing carpentry up in the office and he come and told us that the, he said, "The police had been rung." You see. So we waited

15:00 until the policemen came and got this thing and fired along the, several times, and had it on a piece of wood, on a piece of wire and I threw it into the bushes and then raced around with the police looking, to see where it had, where the explosion had come from. And then a day or two afterwards… I forgot to tell you that we also did wool classing and we used to do

15:30 wool classing on Saturday mornings. The School of Mines ran on Saturday mornings, it was a five and a half day week, and we had to do the wool classing. We were fairly late so they said, "Oh, give this cannon another go." You see, so we got it out and my mate Barney Bell, he had a little piece of

16:00 steel, and so he said, "We'll leave this steel in it, see how far it will shoot." You see. And it went off and blew the canon in half. Fortunately none of us were hurt and I think there were three or four of us there, none of us were hurt. And so the Monday, that was on the Saturday, and on the Monday morning the principal came down to see what had been going on you see. And so

16:30 we were able to show him the two halves of the cannon. Barney had one half and I had the other you see. And he said, "You should have wrapped it with wire." And he had been away when the first shot went off and then, and he couldn't make out why the policeman was there.

17:00 It was at night you see, the school ran at night as well, and we used to go to the school at night, we weren't supposed to go in the school at night, but we used go there and we'd go in the, turning and fitting was one of our main things. I made an, the three of us, or the four of us might have, we made an electric motor. You know, we got the wooden pattern, the electrical

17:30 instructor, Mr Sutherland, he had a pattern of an electric motor and we got these casts and we turned them down at the electrical shop, at the turning and fitting, and made the whole thing. And even the commutator which is a whole lot of

18:00 copper pieces, insulated. So we used to go into the turning and fitting shop and then there'd be too many apprentices there that night and we'd get thrown out of there and we'd go into the woodwork shop, probably get thrown out of that, and back into the blacksmithing. And we were going in five and a half

18:30 days and five nights a week. And, we also did motor mechanics, there was an old car there, and it was one of the night subjects that we did. So we had quite a, it was quite a, and of course Mr Hesseltine, he'd been in the engineers in the First World War and I think he

19:00 approved of our explosion.

Well I was going to say, what year was this that you're talking about?

'25 and '26, but I left in '26. And Mr Hesseltine invited Barney Bell and I to go to Adelaide with him, and his mother lived in Adelaide and we went over there for Christmas.

19:30 It was probably on account of our cannoning experience. But then, I don't know what we're up to now.

I was going to ask you about the depression years, you would have been on the farm during that period.

On the farm with my uncle in the depression years, of course, we were.

20:00 We used to get seasonal labourers there for the harvest because the horses had to be fed and there was a lot of hay to be cut and the men used to come for stoking the hay and also stacking it. And then,

20:30 it was 1913, when my, when the family, they bought a Massey Harris header and Grandfather took great exception to this, him being an old threshing man, he reckoned that that ruined the country, that spread all the weed seeds out and wasn't enough straw for the cattle. And he was so upset that he took two oil paintings down off the wall,

21:00 he had, I don't know whether he or my grandmother had it, and he went over to my mother at Maryborough and stayed over there for three or four days, and gave her these two oil paintings. And I've got one of them out in the kitchen. And my sister's family has the other one. But this header it was that header that I put that, that thing through.

21:30 Of course they were pulled by horses and the drum, that was where the grain was thrashed, had a ratchet on it so that it got up to a big speed but you could turn the thing to get it started before the horses, so it didn't go off with a…

22:00 That the drum was working a bit, and there was another one of these on a fan at the back. And so my uncle, one of my uncles was driving this thing you see, and in the front, and I was a very small boy and turning the one at the back and that put my fingers through the cogs. But fortunately I was close to the house and raced into the house and that's how I got one finger a bit bent.

22:30 I think they just wrapped it up then, yeah, so. And then during the depression of course, there were a lot of people, there's no assistance, no assistance for people that were unemployed, there was no unemployed

23:00 relief tax or anything. But at that time, Stan Bruce was the prime minister and he had a very safe seat of course, being a prime minister, and there was a man came out, Sir Otto Newmark came out from England, and I always thought he was an economist or something, but he was the chairman of the Bank of England. And Australia must have owed the Bank of

23:30 England a lot of money, and so Sir Otto had come out to see the prime minister. And about that time, Stan Bruce went to the people and said, you know, we're in such trouble it was put up a scheme to reduce wages, and there was an election on and there was a terrible fuss,

24:00 and there were people that had never voted for the prime minister that had never voted any other way than, would have re-elected the prime minister but not only did he lose being prime minister but he lost his safe seat, and Jimmy Scullin got it. And he was the label man and went to the treasury to do the great things that he was going to do. The treasury said there's no money coming

24:30 into the treasury, because at that time there was only income tax, there was no tax on wages. And, so they, the treasury persuaded Jimmy Scullin to put a tax on wages, but that was the only people getting any money, those that were working, there was a tremendous lot that weren't working. And so they brought this wages tax and it was called

25:00 the unemployed relief tax. And it was such a good tax that they've still got it but it's not called the unemployed relief tax now, they've changed it's name. And, but that was, there were and there were about, I think my uncle had about 20 men digging potatoes, people that never used a fork in their life before.

25:30 But most of the seasonal labourers used to have a bit of a bet on the horses, you know, they'd go up to the pub on Saturday, to an SP [starting price] bookie and, but there was one old chap and he said to them, because,

26:00 and he said, "Now, you'd better to work on the stock exchange." So he got these fellows off the race horses onto the stock exchange, and his theory was that you got the paper and you saw what was the cheapest thing on the stock exchange, they'd be down to thruppence a share you see, and you buy as many threepenny shares as you can afford,

26:30 and have your friends to buy them and by the fact that you've bought them, they'd go up to sixpence, and when they get up to sixpence, you sold them. And this was quite an amusement, these fellows who used to bet on the race horses got onto the stock exchange. And it was, I think it was before that, that a chap came around

27:00 from Somerset, and I used to go down to the hut, I was never barred from going down to the hut to yarn to the men. There was a hut there that men used to live in, and at some, you know, they had a fire and one thing or another, and this chap used to tell people a story about how, he used to get peas

27:30 and soak it in whisky and feed it to the lord of the manor's pheasants, and all you had to do was pick these, pheasants, these drunk pheasants up. Well when we, when I was up at Horsham, when I moved to Horsham, we had trouble up there with the cockatoos, so I had, I got a permit to try this

28:00 idea of soaking grain in alcohol and it lasted for 12 months. But what I didn't know was that whisky has got, is nearly half water, and that the grain wouldn't accept the pure alcohol, and of course I was only doing it sort of part time, and it wasn't a success.

28:30 But by this time I'd found out that I reckon I would, that if I put water with it that it would have done it. And so I went back to get a permit to try it again, and they refused me a permit because they said that under the Pharmaceutical Act,

29:00 alcohol was classed as a poison and the department was dead against poisoning cockatoos. And so I said to the Doctor Beggs that refused to give me this permit, I told him that I'd, that at that time I could

buy any poison that I required, all I had to do was sign the poisons book, and would he get legislation put through

29:30 to have a poisons book on every bar counter.

What did you think would happen to the cockatoos, if it had worked, and they ate the grain the alcoholic grain, what would it do to them? What were you hoping to do?

Oh well, we were hoping we could catch them and deal with them. You see the one, the reason

30:00 that they, well the original reason that they said you couldn't poison birds was that you would poison birds that weren't, that you weren't allowed to destroy, and there'd be magpies and other things that would take the poison by, because the

30:30 cockatoos, when we first went up to Nurrabiel, they were only a few of them about, but every now and again, when they got too thick, somebody would give them a good dose of poison, you see. But they used to poison magpies and other things that you weren't allowed to destroy, but that's a story on it's own, is the poison.

31:00 **You were talking about those depression years, I'm just wondering if your neighbours like the farmers around you and the district, if they suffered very much?**

Yes, well there was, there was another thing, there was a farmers debt adjustment and then there was another thing that the Labour Government brought in and that was the farmers debt adjustment.

31:30 And now, if you had a debt and couldn't pay it off and you couldn't pay the interest, you could go onto this farmers debt adjustment and you didn't have to pay your debts off. And that saved some people but there were some people that just, particularly the ones who's farms had deteriorated, they had no hope, there was quite a number of farms that were sold

32:00 to people that, you see the… I think that the horses were very rough on the country, they would eat country out, and it's when we got rid of the horses, it made a big difference. But that was the, that was state, the farmers debt adjustment and when I sold out of,

32:30 at Inverloch, I said to the auctioneer that, I knew him, his mother and my aunt were sisters and I knew him very well, and I said to him when I had taken this place on at Inverloch, the auctioneer had said that the people up there in the district that I bought into, he said that they're all good farmers.

33:00 And that they all supported the hospital, he was a hospital man, and they all supported their church, whichever it might be, and none of them went under that farmers debt adjustment. And he being an agent had lost his farm because the people that had gone under the farmers debt adjustment hadn't paid him. Mack at,

33:30 the agent that we used to work through, were Trenchens, in Melbourne here, selling stock and selling with particularly with the stud stock and stud cattle and Mr Trenchen, he had no family and when he decided to sell out, he sold it to the Australian Estates,

34:00 and they're, it was still to be run as Trenchens, like, although the Estates owned it, it was to still be run as Trenchens. And so I was in there talking to the accountant one day and must have, during the depression, Mr Trenchen had financed people with sheep up in the Mallee, he had a lot of clients up in the Mallee. And they had sheep on three months bill, that at the end of the three months,

34:30 you could either pay for the sheep or else they had to be sold. And he was quite a character, Mr Trenchen. He would, he was, you know, an auctioneer and he didn't seem to know any of his clients, but he knew them all, auctioneers are always, you know, great fellows and know everybody but he never did. And one

35:00 of the auctioneers told me that he'd come into his office every morning and he'd go to the door and he'd turn the handle and the door wouldn't open and he just rattle it and turn back the other way, and turned it back the other way and then you hear… But he knew where all these sheep were, and so he financed his sheep, so I said to this accountant, "I've often wondered, see, you seem to be a wizard, do this in the days of the depression." He said,

35:30 "Where did he get the money from?" And they said, "Oh, he got it from the National Bank." And I said, "Well I always thought he was a wizard, but I didn't think he was that good." And she said, "No, he was a director of the bank." And then they told me that, that he had a book that he kept in the office and it's locked, and he had the key, and this book went to the Australia and the states and he said,

36:00 "You know, there are people in that book who's name will never, ever want for finance." He said they were people who had taken advantage of the farmers debt adjustment, some of the families the parents had died, and the young people had paid the money off. He said they'll never want for finance, but he said there are some names in that book that will never get any.

36:30 Those were the things that happened during the depression because they were terrible. I had a neighbour down there, in Middle Park, who was, it was, a little, I think he may have been a little older

than me at school. And I saw him, not

37:00 so many, many years ago and he was saying about the depression, how it affected his father and Mother. There was his mother and father and another brother and a sister, and an uncle, all living together. And during the depression, he was the only one that was working. And he sort of kept the whole family, he was only a boy.

With the farmers

37:30 **debt adjustment, was that scheme where the farmers can write off their debts? That must have affected other people, so for example traders or, as you say, the agents, the auctioneer.**

Well you see, the auctioneers, I told my friend down at Alex Stewart Scott about this and he said that

38:00 when he came to my clearing sale, that he didn't get there as early as the rest of them because he had a lot of, there'd been a sale the day before and he had a lot of cheques to sign, and the sale was going when he came. And he said, "You know the first three people I saw at your sale were three people that did us with the farmers debt adjustment." And he said, "I'll never put any business, I've never done anything against, them, but I've never put any business in

38:30 their way." I was telling this story to Dave, it was Dave Anderson who told me this story, he was my grandmother's cousin actually. And telling this story to him, his son in law, and with other people were around, it was at the church I think

39:00 in Horsham, and tell everyone the story you see and afterwards you said, "You know, one of those fellows that was in that group did …" My father in law forget the farmers debt adjustment.

What about you and your uncle and the Tippett Brothers,

39:30 **did they have to do any debt adjusting?**

No, they never did any debt adjustment, they were, you see they financed you know, fairly shrewdly and they had a thrashing plant, still had a thrashing plant. It was sold, and

40:00 before I was out there, but my uncle Jack he went in with Dave Ronaldson, that, I think, that the money was left to, not to my uncle Jack but to the Tippett Brothers, grandfather lent it to Tippett Brothers, and they had to pay the interest on, and they had to pay the… And after

40:30 my grandfather died, not long before my father did. And there was two probates on my father's estate within six months. And so that's why I can always thank Jo Bjelke Peterson, he did away with the probate and a lot of people say well, Jo was this, that and the other, and I used to say, well I can forgive Jo for anything else that he didn't, he did away with probate.

Tape 3

00:40 **So Gilbert, let's talk about that 1939, you were still on the farm, war came, what, how'd that affect what you were doing and what decisions did you make?**

Yes, well, I was, 'cause I told you before that I was a miserable kid. And I never got into

01:00 any fights and I was a great pacifist, but as the war developed, I was, you know, fairly interested in perhaps enlisting, but being a farmer, of course, you were exempt and when this chap made me a very good offer for the place, I sold it and

01:30 joined the air force. Well, I think I told you before that I spent three months in the Exhibition building in RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology] and then out at the showground, and then when Darwin was bombed, the showgrounds became a place

02:00 where they assembled people to send them up to Darwin. And so I landed up in Darwin fairly soon or about a month after it was originally bombed. I got up there in time for the eighth raid. There were 60 odd raids in the territory and I was up there for 40 of them. And when I went up there

02:30 we were, we went up and I was sent up with Number 1 Mobile Works and they said all our equipment was up there see, and so we took nothing up with us. And after I'd been up there a short time, I did scrounge a hammer and a cold chisel, and we're digging trenches and all,

03:00 and you know, up there in the heat and landed up there I think it was March. February was one of, when the first raid was and we landed up there in March and I thought crikey, I'll never be able to work in the heat. But after about a fortnight it was remarkable what you could do. You know, you could even dig deep trenches, particularly if they were the safest thing when there was a bomb about.

03:30 And so I, and eventually, of course the Mobile Works there, we had no equipment and our CO [Commanding Officer] he got into some trouble and was called back to Victoria Barracks I think. It

seems the army had got some stuff

04:00 up on a boat and he sent a couple of air force trucks down there to get it. And the army eventually found out that the air force were loading the stuff into their trucks instead of the army trucks and so, but he was way back somewhere he could see, and when the fuss started he went down there and roused onto these fellows, like nobody's business, and ordered

04:30 them back home. But he eventually went down to Melbourne and they were train loads of stuff came up for the air force. But I've never ever caught up with him again and I said to somebody about Murchison, being our CO and they said, "Oh he finished up being court martialled." I don't know what he did after that

05:00 but he was put onto, they wanted bomb shelters for the planes to go into, you see, after… Of course, when we landed up there, oh we went up on the Ghan of course, left Melbourne, left the showgrounds, and went through Ballarat about midnight and

05:30 then we had a day off in Adelaide and I went to see Uncle Gilbert Dorbarn there, and he was an elderly gent. He had been an instructor at the School of Mines in Ballarat and he'd been, he was with the big mining company over in, or he'd been with a big mining company in South Australia, but he was retired. And

06:00 then the next day we were on the Ghan, you know, going up to, and going through the Hallett Railway station, my mother's cousin was there with a fruit cake for me. Her father must have rung up and said I was coming up on this train, and so that was the first parcel I had that was, it was

06:30 from Kitty. And then we went up, of course with the Ghan, the old Ghan used to run once a fortnight, we… Most amused, I think it was at Oodnadatta, there was a notice that the timetable was, that it came on a certain day once a fortnight, no time or anything

07:00 else, it was just one day, once a fortnight. That's because it was when Darwin was bombed they were sending up a train a day. And we were on this train and we got up and the boiler tube blew and so they had to let it cool down, and to fix the boiler tube to seal it up, they must have

07:30 had gear there to do it. And so we were away quite a while and there was another train coming up the line behind us and so they said, "Oh, what's that train coming up behind us?" And I said, "Oh, that's tomorrow's train that's caught us up." And we arrived at Darwin, and the next day we were loaded onto army motor trucks and

08:00 sent out, and went to our first stop that we had, was at Teatree Wells. We had lunch there, at Teatree Wells. A tin of bully beef amongst us three, or something. And, but it was a little old shanty there, and there were two or three of us, said, "Oh we'll go over…" And there was

08:30 an old truck there and we went over there and saw a couple of the locals and yarning to them, and I put a question to them that my uncle often put to people was, you know, "What sort of country is it around here?" You see, and people in Victoria would say, "Oh it's good, sound country here, but you go ten miles further north, and you got to watch it a bit." And in New South Wales, if you ask them they'll say, "If you get 20 or 30 miles to the west, you got to watch it." So I put this question to these two characters and

09:00 they said, "Oh it's god's own country here, but you go 200 miles over there and oh, hopeless." And then we went on, the first night we camped in tents, and then the second night we were, I can't remember the name of the place. Any rate

09:30 we met the last people, all civilians were evacuated from Darwin, there were no civilians there when we got there. And I went out and there was a bit of a rise and some granite places, I went out there to have a bit of a look around the country to see what it was like, being a farmer of course. And there was another chap out there and he was one of those that had come down from Darwin, and he said he was in

10:00 charge of all the light houses around the coast. And he was told that he was to stay there, and that the army had told him to get the train and to get out of it and that was the way they went. And though they, and you know, we had another camp there and then we got on the train at, there was a train came down from Darwin, a cattle train.

10:30 Oh crikey's I haven't got the name for that either, and so we got onto this train and it was all cattle trucks of course, and we had a day's trip up to Darwin on the, in the cattle trucks, and it went through the, through the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] drome, to the edge of it, and it stopped on the RAAF drome and emptied us all out there. And the buildings at the RAAF were, you know,

11:00 they were up on stilts, being in the tropics, and they were built out of fibro cement, and the Japs had bombs that had a two inch pipe on it, two feet of pipe on them, and so when they hit the ground and it exploded and blew holes in these things everywhere. And we camped for a couple of nights on the drome and then we were sent off

11:30 to various places. And, but it made a tremendous mess of the drome, you know, when, and ran into some

army chaps you see, and said air force fellows, mob of deserters you see. And so they said, “Had to stop you down at Adelaide River.” These were the fellows that were bombed the first day of the raid.

12:00 And then I’d heard there’d been an inquiry but I’d never get to the bottom of it, and I’ve made a lot of enquiries about it. And one day I was in the archives here in Melbourne and I asked them about the, you know if the, if there were any, if they had anything about it and they said, “Oh, you’d have to write to Canberra.” And they gave me two addresses to write to Canberra. So I wrote to Canberra and I got back there and they said that I will have

12:30 to come up to Canberra to see the stuff or somebody would do it for me at 14 dollars an hour. I can do without with it for 14 dollars an hour.

Well we’ve interviewed someone who was there and said there was some deserting going on.

Yes well, I’ll tell you about that. And so, then I took these papers back to the archives and they said,

13:00 “Oh you’d have to go to Canberra.” And then they got on their computer and they said, “Oh, we’ve got it here.” And so they said, “You come back tomorrow and we’ll get it out of the, out of the store for you.” So I went, raced back in there the next morning and they gave me a big envelope and I pulled all the papers out of that and I found a report that,

13:30 oh, can’t remember the name of the man, that, he was a justice, Justice Lowe, had been sent up there by Dr Evatt to see what did go on in Darwin, and he was up there, before I was up there. And so I had a look through his, and I found the four or five pages, it was about 20 or 30 pages by Dr Lowe, of

14:00 Lowe’s report. And about six pages about the air force and so on. So I got onto them you see, and it seems that, of course when the Japs come over they bombed the harbour for a start and then they were back in about 20 minutes trying to bomb the air force. And they really cleaned up all the machine shops and put holes in them, living quarters and made a

14:30 great mess of it. And Lowe was told that, that the men were told to go half a mile down the road and half a mile into the bush. But he said he believed those who told him that they were told to go nine miles down the road, and some of them went down as far as Batchelor, and some of them had gone down as far as Adelaide River, 50 miles down the road. And there was one fellow who’d reported into

15:00 Victoria Barracks 13 days afterwards. But I was disappointed that Lowe never said what happened to him. Whether he’d been promoted or thrown into the prison. And so I got these half dozen pages so they, next morning, I thought what a fool I was, I didn’t get the whole lot of them. So back into the archives again and said,

15:30 “Now look I want the rest of this.” They said, “Oh, we’ve sent it back to the store but there are two boxes here about that long and about that wide, with A4 paper standing up in them that I didn’t see yesterday.” So they’re, they put me into a holy of holies,

16:00 up in archives, and into these boxes, and some of them were marked secrets and some of them were marked extra secrets and some of them marked not to be opened for 50 years, and there was some of them marked confidential. And I had all these papers, and I found an index, and so I wasn’t going to wade through all these. And there was

16:30 a sister in law’s brother, Reid, Nancy Reid, she was an air force nurse, but her brother had been to Ambon and he’d been to, evacuated to Darwin and I thought, one of these was a Chap Reid, so I thought perhaps he’d given evidence and so on. Turned it up and it was the governor

17:00 of the gaol, and he’d given this great scream, and said he had one of the prisoners working in the garden and he came rushing inside and said there’s a terrible noise down in the dust and flies everywhere. So the governor raced around the gaol and told them all to get underneath something else. And, at any rate, gaol must have got knocked about because there was

17:30 another report from the police to say that there was bit of looting going on, and there was fellow had two pushbikes, it was no good arresting these fellows who had been looting because the gaol wasn’t any good. And there was another report from the chief up

18:00 in Darwin, the administrator, and he had a 10 or 15 page report. And then there was another petition to have him removed for incompetence. So there’s, those two boxes have got a tremendous lot of interesting stuff in them. But you know, what people had said and what they had done. And there was one fellow that had been

18:30 released out of the gaol and he was pardoned for what he did during the raids. And let, and he’d really got stuck into it and the thing they objected to, the administrator, was that he’d saved the grog. And he’s taken it down to the officers’ mess in case the boys got it.

19:00 And the, and then sent his wife down to Alice Springs with his car loaded up with some of the valuables out of… But there were some funny things went on up there.

Can I ask you Gilbert, just taking you back a bit further, why had you made that decision to

join the air force, why not one of the other services, what appealed to you?

Well I thought

19:30 that I was a bit too old for air crew and I thought I'd be working on aeroplanes. Being mechanically inclined, but instead of that they put us on motor vehicles.

So what was, those first few months are at, the Royal Showgrounds and RMIT, what were you

20:00 **training for there?**

Oh, you would just, did what you were told, you could say what they liked but it didn't make much difference.

Was there much drill, I mean was the military and discipline side of it?

At the showground, it was run as an air force camp should be run. We were there, we were there during the Melbourne Cup and

20:30 so we were able to go under a tunnel and into the show, into the race course for free. And, but some funny things that happened when we were at the racecourse and… But then when we got up to Darwin, see I was much

21:00 Number One Mobile Works. Well I was never ever with them because I was digging trenches and working around bomb dumps down at Batchelor and he came back to Darwin, I've got photos of that. And it was…

21:30 what had been the air force motor pool in Darwin. Well an hour workshop was under a tree, it eventually got it, got some over and we had the telephone but very little equipment because it had all been destroyed and we had some tools. But when I first went to this camp,

22:00 it's at the ten mile and it's opposite Duckies Lagoon, so I can still find it when I go to Darwin, so I think there are shops or factories built there now. But, at the ten mile, we had practically no spare parts and we had to improvise to keep the vehicles running and there were a lot of vehicles that had been impressed, that they were, when the civilians went the army said, oh bring all your vehicles, we'll look after them, you see. Well then the air force and the army used to impress the vehicles you see. And they were, and

22:30 there was one vehicle, it was a little, it was a Chev [Chevrolet] and the officer, who had it thought it wasn't good enough, and so he… They thought the Chev wasn't good enough so we adopted it for, as the Chev, for the benefit of the people and we used to go buffalo shooting with this Chev. Until somebody else thought it was good enough for an officer, so we lost it. And then there was a little old Morris vehicle there, you know.

23:00 It was missing a universal joint and somebody found one that had been scrapped from an aircraft, and we were able to bodgey that onto this Morris and we had this, you know, driving it around. And we got a new air force officer and he saw this thing and it didn't have a registered plate on it that had been impressed,

23:30 and so he took it off us and had it impressed. But the story about this Morris was that, people that had been there, you know, before the bombing, and they knew the fellow that owned this Morris, and he persuaded the authorities that it had been bombed, and he got the insurance on it. And so when

24:00 it was impressed, but didn't tell the officer that it had already been written off, whether the insurance company caught up with the, with our officer I don't know. The other thing that happened there was, we had no electricity and we were, you know, pumping up truck tyres with a hand pump, it wasn't any joke at all in the heat.

24:30 And at night we were, you know, talking about what we can do about getting some mechanical means of making a pump. And there were all sorts of things brought up, and I think it was I that said, "Look, there's an old Chev engine there, and if we cut…" I said to one of the other chappies that had

25:00 been brought up in a garage, I said, "If we cut the two manifolds in the centre and make them compressors and drive them with the other four." See so, oh yes this is, so we get to business and he put weak, we put weak springs on the valves so they'd open and shut on their own account, and shorten the pumps so the cams didn't reduce the… And

25:30 he made valves out of old spark plugs and a ball bearing to take the compressed air off and we got this thing going, and oh she was going like a charm, and it only pumped 20 pounds of air. And it wasn't good enough, and so I said, "Look, if we fill up the

26:00 cavity in the head, there's an old Ford head there, aluminium head there." I said, "I'll melt that and put that in the cavity in the head so that we increase the compressions." And so I was beating myself. It was another chap and I had a forge there and he had done some blacksmithing and so had I, so we

26:30 thought a forge would be a good thing. We didn't have any oxyacetylene or any welders so we made this

forge. So I was making a ladle to develop the aluminium and one of the drivers came home and said, “What are you doing Tip?” And I said, “I’m making a ladle to melt this aluminium.” “I bet you a hundred quid you can’t melt it in that thing,” you see. And I said, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll bet you two bottles of beer, next beer night, that I can.”

27:00 You see we got two bottles of beer, per man per week, perhaps. “So that’ll do me,” he said, “I’ll have four bottles of beer,” you see. So I didn’t have any trouble melting the aluminium in the steel thing that I beat out of an old door, and I won his two bottles of beer, but being a teetotaller, then I had to find somebody to

27:30 drink it for me. And this went on about the camp about two or three days. To get someone to drink it.

What about the pump?

Oh, it worked well. And, oh it worked well, and there was one chap from Queensland there and when I first went there, there was no

28:00 officer in charge of the workshop. There was a transport officer but he was just allotting things, he wasn’t living there with us, and there was no officer at the workshop, no NCO [Non Commissioned Officer]. But we had a telephone on and there was this chap from Queensland who was competent, and we all accepted him as our boss. And

28:30 there was, one day someone rang up, one officer rang up for a truck, you see, and wanted to speak to the NCO in charge of the workshop and this fellow said, “We haven’t got an NCO out here but I’ll put you onto the Leading AC1 [aircraftsman].” And so, so this chap got on the phone and this fellow wanted a vehicle you see, and he said, “Well we’ve got no vehicles here, they’re all out.” He said, “I must have a vehicle,” he said. “Well hang on,” he said, “I’ll chop you one out of a tree.”

29:00 And anyway, we did get an officer that took a bit of interest in the workshop, and he thought this pump of ours was a good thing, and he thought George Walter was a good thing too. And he was shifted to a, by this time they were using the road

29:30 as a runway and they carved into the bush on either side, down the road, about every 10 or 12 miles, for the parking of the planes. And when there was a raid on the fighters used to come out, one would come out this way, and he’d go off that way and one would come out the other way, and they’d take off the other way. And any rate, George and this officer went down

30:00 to one of these, this officer was posted down there, so he took George and he took George, and he took our air compressor.

George was the Queenslander was he?

He was the Queenslander, yes, George Walter was the Queenslander. I think his name was George Walter. And then they, so that settled it, and there was a…

30:30 At one stage there were two chaps there, they were drivers and they’d been to Ambon. See there was an air force station at Ambon, you know, Ambon’s up, it’s part of Indonesia I suppose now. It’s at the end of New Guinea, it’s at the Indonesian end of New Guinea. And they were, there was an air

31:00 force station there and when the Japs were coming down, these people were, they evacuated our boys, but they didn’t have room for six or seven of them and they were left behind. And these two claimed that they were two that were left behind and that they were told to destroy everything on the drome and to make for the coast. So there was a

31:30 2E, that was an engine fitter and there was a 2A, that was an aircraft fitter, and there was a cook and a guard, these two, these two drivers. And the 2A said, “Look there’s a plane here. It only wants a new wing on it, and there’s a new wing

32:00 there.” And the 2E said, “Well look, if we can get the wing on it, I could fly the thing.” Despite the fact that he wasn’t a pilot. So the cook and the guard and they, they swapped the whole wing off and put a new wing on it. And then, so as it wasn’t a very big plane, they threw everything off it that they could, so that they could take off,

32:30 and away they went. And they got to Darwin, and being an unidentified plane, the ack ack [anti aircraft] opened up on them, but fortunately for them the ack ack wasn’t very accurate. And they landed, and then their story was that they got landed in Peter for disobeying the orders. And, but there was no record of that

33:00 in Lowe’s report, whether, and I’ve never been able to get, I got a history of Ambon and there’s nothing in there about it, but there were some people left behind. But in the history, I think there were only supposed to be three that were left behind. So if you can find out

33:30 some more history about that, those fellows, last ones to leave Ambon and it’d be most interesting.

So the two drivers were with them, at 10 mile were they?

Yes, they were there, and then at the 10 mile, and one of them, one of them got a cockatoo from

somewhere, and his mate, these two were camped in a, three or four of us in a camp, and these two were

34:00 camped together, and this other chap were always going to wring this cockatoo's neck, see. And the cockatoo, he ran into a lot of trouble. Corporal B they used to call him. And, Corporal B would, whenever a vehicle would come in, you'd see his head go around and round

34:30 watching the valve on the wheel. And if there was no cap on it, he'd dive on this and press the cap and the air would whistle up through his feathers. You can imagine what used to happen to Corporal B when he got caught doing that.

What was the B stood for?

35:00 Corporal Bastard. All would know it was Corporal B.

So what was your, were you a corporal at this stage?

No, I was an AC1 until I came back to, came back to Sale I think, but eventually I became a corporal. And that, one of my friends up in Horsham,

35:30 he was also a corporal in the air force but he lost his corporal, I never lost mine. He lost his. He was in the workshop too, he was a farmer, and what happened to him was, an officer caught him refereeing a fight that he should have been stopping, in the hangar, and so he lost his corporalship.

36:00 But I went close to losing mine a few times, but I never lost it.

So how long were you based there at 10 Mile?

Oh, I don't know how many months I was there, but we were there for quite a while. See I was up in the territory for 13 months altogether, and I suppose I spent eight or nine

36:30 months there, and then we shifted to, by this time, that Darwin wasn't raided so often, so we were shifted closer into the drome, at the creek.

37:00 At any rate, there was a creek that ran fairly close to it but it was out of bounds, you weren't able to swim in it, and we used to go swimming in it. But afterwards we found out there were crocodiles also swam in that creek. Rapid Creek, and I've got a photo of a couple of us swimming in Rapid Creek. Wasn't a very good place to

37:30 swim, it was beautiful water, you know, the water was nice and warm and it was just like being in a warm bath. But when we went to Rapid Creek, we were shifted from the 10 mile to Rapid Creek, and instead of being mechanics, we became bush carpenters. And built a shed for a workshop. It

38:00 was mainly a roof and they… And then there was the, one chap he reckoned he was going to be a builder when he finished, and he was working on what was our mess, and he put in a table, and it was too high to sit at and too low to stand at.

38:30 It couldn't have been worse, and it was just an earth floor and it was just a roof and this was a longer side. And there were meat ants there, and they used to come in there and fight and carry on. And there was a chap, one of the chaps was, he was scraping out

39:00 some white ants, he had some boxes stacked up you see, for shelves. And the white ants got in there and he was scraping these white ants out and the meat ants were attacking the white ants and he reckoned it wasn't a fair, there were too many meat ants. So he got a ring and he made an iron ring and put it down on it, even numbering. And there was little small ants, I got,

39:30 I think I'd have got 14 cakes while I was up there, in the 13 months, so I did fairly well and there were a number of other things. And I ripped, I had a, I think I found a piece that I'd written that there was a 270, 270 letters that I'd got and I'd answered them all in the 13 months, and papers and…

Tape 4

00:33 **I'm sure there are more stories you can tell me about 10 mile, it sounds like a very strange little set up there. Were you actually doing something other than building your pumps and things? What work were you doing there?**

Oh well, you see there were, we had no, practically no replacement parts and we used to have to improvise.

01:00 And so that was why Alan Wilmot and I set up a forge, because, you know, with the rough roads and one thing and another there were springs breaking. And so we used to go around to where these cars were that were impressed, and put a rope around them and put them upside down and take the springs off

them, and take them home. And if there was a truck came in with a broken spring you see, we'd

01:30 put roll eyes in the, if we got them off an old truck or something, and put them in. And we used to temper them in sump oil and that would give them a guarantee and tell that you know, if that broke to come back, and they were back at any rate. Always gave the a guarantee with the springs. And, then we had a coil, a number eight wire,

02:00 and you can, being a person of, a number of us were farming, you see, there's a lots of things, machinery that can be fixed with number eight wire. One of the highlights was that one time there was an American driver came in with his truck and he said, "Oh, it's making a terrible noise," he said. Would we have a look at it? And so we had a look at it and sure enough the,

02:30 all the bolts, the gear box was independent of the engine, and all the bolts were missing out of the gear box and the gear box was flapping around. So we didn't have any bolts to fit it and so we got this coil of wire and twist some down and he started it up and he said, "Cor, it's gone better than it's gone for a long time." I don't know

03:00 what sort of workshops they had. And our drivers were great fellows for bringing stuff home, you see. Anything that was lying around they'd bring it home. And they brought home a refrigerator one time. I don't know where they got it, we didn't ask them but it'd had some shrapnel through it, and was a kerosene refrigerator and none of us knew anything about refrigerators.

03:30 And we had it under some hessian, under the tree, and I said to anybody who came there, what they did in civvy life. And there was a Yank came in there one day, and I asked him what he did in civvy life, and he said, "Guy, I was a refrigeration engineer." "Oh," I said, "You're just the man we're looking for." You see. So we grab hold of this fellow and take him around to this fridge, and take it off and he's sort of objecting and one thing or another, and

04:00 he said, "Guy, I was in refrigeration servicing, you know, fixing them up." And I said, "Oh that's good." He said, "I was taking the screws out of the doors." He was a refrigeration engineer. And then,

04:30 they had acquired a ramp, see, I don't know where they got, where they found the ramp. And we had one chap there that was, he had a bad back but nobody believed that his back was bad, but a bad back was a sort of thing that that the medical profession couldn't tell whether you were swinging the lead or whether it was fair dinkum. And he had this bad back and was hoping to get home. It was someone that knew him very well

05:00 thought that he was just swinging the lead. So they got him to put this ramp up you see, and so he didn't get the run up to it quite straight. And, of course, anybody that came, there were a couple of our fellows that could drive up onto that without any trouble you see, and anybody who came

05:30 and wanted something done to their vehicle, we'd say, "Righto, drive it up onto the ramp." You see they'd have one look at this ramp and they'd say, "Oh," you know. And then somebody would drive it up for them. And there was one day there was a Yankee boy turned up with a flash car, and it turned out to be MacArthur's car. And so I said to him, "Righto, run it up on the ramp," you see. And so

06:00 he revs the engine up and he only got half way up, and came off this, with MacArthur's car there, hanging onto, hanging on the run up to this ramp. But fortunately it had nothing much wrong with it. Might have been some tin wear.

So were you, you were an air force mobile unit, but are you servicing

06:30 **army as well, you're looking after…?**

No, only air force, but we were, we were on the main road. Like it was, say the road going towards Adelaide River, that anybody that was in trouble they would come into our workshop, and that, there was…

07:00 We eventually got a WO [Warrant Officer], a warrant officer in charge of the workshop, and he was an old permanent air force officer, and so he knew all the rules and regulations you know, of what you couldn't do. And didn't altogether approve of what we did do but there was nothing else you could do about it. But there was, Duckies

07:30 Lagoon, that was on the other side of the road, and somebody must have thought there a whole lot of magpie geese up there. And somebody must have thought magpie geese would be good for change in the diet, and they were shooting these magpies geese with their 303's, and their spent bullets were coming over into our camp. And they said, "Oh, you're not going to let them do that

08:00 are you?" Forgotten his name too, and he said, "Oh no." So he pulled on his shirt, and because everybody worked there without any shirt on, he pulled on his shirt with his WO stripe, put his hat on, got a motor bike and away he went. He soon stopped the shooting. He was a good man with the authority.

08:30 But the air force chap, he used to, you know the old permanent men, they knew nothing about Fords or Chevs or anything like that. It was only, I think, Austins were the only things they knew anything about.

If it wasn't Austin they didn't know it. But we used to, you know, fix up stuff with all

09:00 sorts of peculiar guise and gadgets.

What about your little escapades in the Chevy, shooting buffalo, water buffalo? Did you have much luck?

Well no, we, of course we didn't have any ammunition, any shooting. I was up there for three months and we had no shooting irons.

09:30 So I would think that it was no wonder that the fellows from the workshops made it down to Adelaide River because the army did stop them down there. And I was up there for the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin, and we went down to Adelaide River and there was a padre down there that had been there 60 years before. And

10:00 when he first went down there, the CO said, "Look, take the sergeant and go up along the river and select a site for the cemetery," he said, "Because we'll have some casualties here." And he said, "Pick a site where the digging's too bad." And he was about

10:30 to say then, that people had got down as far as Adelaide River, and the CO had stopped them there. And he said, "Now look, I think you boys had better go back." And so we said, "Better I send them back in motor trucks." But there were no, you know, you can be head up for being a deserter, you know, getting that far down the road. And then in the army, I don't think any, I don't know if any of the army fellows

11:00 that ever went down there, but the army. And there was some of my friends in civvy life, where I'm, the army up there, and we used to go and visit each other. And I remember one fellow there, when they're having lunch there. He said, "You know, we draw the same ration as you do. Your tucker's a lot better than ours, and I don't know what our cooks do to it."

11:30 Air force cooks must have been a bit better than it is.

What was the food like, what were you eating?

What were we eating? When we first went up there was nothing else but rice. You know it was a quite a while, I was up there 22 days before I got a letter. You see, things were really knocked about.

12:00 The day of the first raids, they, the Japs really, they knew what they were doing and there was no planes there too. There were a few on the ground, few American planes on the ground, and a couple of Wirraways, they shot them out very smartly. They were only training planes, they weren't fit for the job up there. And I don't think that we'd have got back

12:30 from Darwin if the Japs had have got around the, oh, they were coming around New Guinea.

Milne Bay.

No, they were stopped at, oh crickey….

Coral Sea?

No, it was some

13:00 reef. Any rate, they were, we was an armada coming around. I'll have to…

It's okay, they were stopped anyway, that's the main thing.

And

13:30 there was a big armada of Japanese coming around, and they were heading for New Guinea, and they were heading our way of course. And the air force spotted them, and between the air force and the Americans, they stopped this

14:00 big fleet of getting around. But I, they were, I think they were supposed to be making for New Guinea, but I think they would have put us out of action if they'd have got around there, the Coral Sea battle.

That's what I just said.

The Coral Sea, yes, I knew it was something like that. And they…

14:30 And so there was an historian up in Canberra said that he was sick of hearing people saying that the Japs were going to invade Australia, because he'd found out that they never had any intention of invading Australia. I'm sorry he wasn't able to tell us that when we were up there. But, so

15:00 I asked one of the chappies that was up with the army up there, who's the secretary of the Darwin Defenders Association now, Rex Raoult. And I said to Rex, "Was there a time when you people were put on alert you know, on strict alert?" And he said, "There was one night, we were all taken down onto the beach and it was pitch black, dark night."

15:30 And of course no lights or anything, so their officer said to them, “Now Raoult, and Sudoltz you two, go up onto the cliff and you’ll get a better view if there is anything coming.” You see, and he said Sudoltz and him were wondering, were scrambling up on the cliff in the dark and they ran into

16:00 a kangaroo that was asleep. I don’t know who got the bigger fright, them or the kangaroo. But they said that their machine gunners only had ammunition to last them 20 minutes. And I don’t think the fellows with the rifles were much better. And so it was…

16:30 They had a, you know, there was the Japs could have walked into that and known exactly what was happening.

Can you tell us about your first experience with the air raids?

Oh well, of course when the alarm went, there was an alarm that used to go off

17:00 and it was either a wind up one or, oh no, it was mainly wind up ones, they had screams you could hear them a mile around, a couple of miles perhaps. And of course everybody would dive down the trenches. The slit trenches, they were our main defence, like, and the idea of a slit trench was that even if it got filled in you could get out, and if it had a top on it you probably get killed

17:30 with the top. And there were, one of these chappies that had been to Ambon, he was in a slit trench the day of the first raid. And he, and there was a bomb dropped pretty close to it and it filled the trench in. And they were digging him out, and there was another lot of bombers came over, and so they whacked a tin hat on him and left him there and

18:00 went for a decent trench. And every now and again somebody would claim to be a great mate of his and just, you can imagine what would have gone on then. They’d be told about how they left him in the trench. And there was another chap, they had a crane or something, they must have fixed up. And

18:30 he was working with an American and they there taking engines off some of the bombers, the American bombers that had been bombed. And there was a raid and there was an alarm went, and so these two tore off down the, to look for a slit trench. And they came to one and it had a goanna in it and the Yank wouldn’t get in, to go

19:00 with the goanna. And so that’s probably, you’re in the way, and away they went and they found another trench, and they got into that and when the all clear went they were wandering back to get on with what they were doing, and blow me if the trench that had had the goanna, it had been blown up. And I’ll tell you, this fellow was a bit toey for a few raids after that. He was down the

19:30 trench pretty smartly, so it’s a, because it was, the alarm went.

What were your personal experiences of the raid? I mean what’s it like the first time you experience that?

Well, there were, it was remarkable. I was never very game you know. Being a miserable kid, and you know. I go down the trench and we’re trying to count the number

20:00 of planes, but by the time we’d got there the ack ack was a bit better and they were, it kept them up a bit higher. And of course we were always pleased when they were over, and the all clear went and it meant I will be back at work again. But there was some fellows that were, you know, as game as Ned Kelly, and they get down the trench and you’d have a job getting them out of the trench when the all clear went.

20:30 And people that weren’t very game would accept it, it was an eye opener to how these people reacted. There was another reaction, don’t know whether I want to tell you this one, you can scrub it out if you don’t like it. But General Blamey arrived on the air force, on

21:00 aerodrome you see, and they’re going out through the guard gate, the guard gave him the salute, and he was, and there was another chap there in air force uniform and screams out, “Have you got your police identity Tom?” And it seemed that Tom Blamey before, he

21:30 was chief commissioner of police in Victoria. And I don’t know whether you knew what happened to him, but he was, there was a raid on a house in Little Lonsdale Street, and Tom’s identity disc was found in this raid. And that night there were no civilians there,

22:00 and their only entertainment that we had were picture nights, about once or twice a week. So they used to gather, we had a lamp and some boxes and things for seats and things, and a lot of them used to get there in the evening, and talking and arguing the point. And cooking up great schemes, and this night of course, this got around the camp like nobody’s

22:30 business. And they got arguing the point as to whether Tom Blamey was a good soldier, because John Monash had him as his offsider in the First World War, or whether he was just a no good so and so, because he’s missing his identity disc, had been found in Little Lonsdale Street. And this went on for oh, for a long time.

23:00 And this argument between the various ones, and so after they’d been going for a while, I had a bit of a

look around to see who was on who's side. And I found that two of them who wouldn't have a bar of him were two who used to spend most of their time bragging about how immoral they were, you know. It was quite an eye opener

23:30 to see the reaction of various ones. And one of these chaps that we had a job to get him out of the trench, he was a great foot runner or he reckoned he was a great foot runner you see. So there was another chap there and they cleared a track. It was all bush round where we were, they cleared a track, there was going to be races you see. And it was Christmas time,

24:00 so running in the wet season when it was hot and damp and humid. And so this other chap was going to go and train him you see. And he used to run with him and then when it came around to the races, because it was about 20 or 30 miles down the road, that there were only the competitors allowed to go, and the chappie that was,

24:30 had been training with him, he wasn't, he couldn't go. So they were away for a couple of days. And the chap came home I think, and the chap came back and this chap raced over and said, "And how did you get on with the race?" "Oh," he said, "I didn't win, but I backed the fellow who did." Oh, I thought he would have killed him. And then another thing that we

25:00 used to do was, used to make things, when things was slack in the workshop. It was, that we used to make things to send home to people you see, and one of the things that we used to have was pearl shells, the drivers would bring us home pearl shells, I don't know where they got them. I think they said the navy had them, and when the navy weren't looking they'd bring us home these pearl shells, that we

25:30 used to make. I made, you know, quite a few things out of pearl shells and it worked very well, and you know, do them with a file and an old hacksaw blade. And then you'd get down and finish up polishing them with toothpaste for the final polish. And they used to also work. I made up a press,

26:00 that some of the others had, and it was the air force emblem and it was, you pressed it into your lead. And so you made a press of this and you could make things that were like brooches, out of perspex. And they used to say that anybody that had to

26:30 go to a crash, first save the perspex and then the pilot. It was always save the perspex first, get hold of any decent perspex. And this chappie that was swinging the lead on the bad back, came home one day and said, "Look, navy."

27:00 He seen some of the naval fellows and they had a fish trap which was stones built like a boomerang, and that a tide came in and when it went out the arms were long enough so that the fish, it'd still be water in there, and the fish couldn't get out. And so he said the navy had said that they would be away and that we could

27:30 have the fish out of the fish trap, you see. Well I should have known better but I went down with him to get the fish. We were going to have fish, you know, at the cook house. And sitting on the dash beach there, waiting for the tide to go out with the sand flies and the mosquitoes. And of course, up in Darwin there's a big rise and fall of the tide, and the tide, it comes in a long way and goes

28:00 out a long way. And then sometimes it just comes in, and of course, this is one of these types, because the navy fellows had told him this. And then I fell for the same thing, and we never got a sight of a dash fish trap let alone fish. I don't know what they had against him but I got caught with him. But another thing

28:30 they used to do, the drivers, I used to come home with all sorts of funny stories about what went on and they, one of them was, they used to put stuff on the boat to go to Melville Island, and there was a radar station there. And at Melville Island, there was a missionary there and

29:00 and he radioed or let them know that the Japs had come over Melville Island. And it was never, when the first raid, this information that he put out would never ever be used. But they put it, set a radar station up there afterwards. And they used to have to go up there and service. And so the

29:30 thing to do was take his stores up there, take the boat and run it up, and get there when the tide was in. Run it up, and the tide would come in and all you had to do was throw the stuff overboard and tell the fellows to take it home. And the first man off the boats would be the coordinator… And one night they were loading this thing up in Darwin, and they had it tied up at the wharf and

30:00 they suddenly realised that you couldn't walk on the deck, it was hanging, the tide was going out and this thing was tied up at the wharf. They had to get an axe to cut the horses that let it down. And then they had the moving pictures, and Chris Goy, he was an AIM [Africa Inland Mission] missionary,

30:30 he was up there with the AIM before he war. But he was a First World War man and so he became a padre very smartly. And having been a First World War man he knew his way around and so he got moving picture machinery up there. So he went to the CO of the army and said that he'd got this moving picture machinery for the boys, so the CO thought

31:00 that was a great idea. And so he said, "All I want is two poles put up so I can pull the machine up," you

see. It was a great picture theatre, you could sit either side of it and see the pictures. And Chris, and then the CO said, “Oh look I’ll have to get permission from the area officer commanding,” you see. “But we’ll see if we can get you a pole up.” And so

31:30 Chris being in the First World War, he went off down to the workshop and saw the warrant officer in charge of the workshop and told him this great story about the stuff that he had, and he was as enthusiastic about it. And so he said, “All I want is a couple of…” He said, “I’ll still whack a couple of poles up,” he said. “But,” he said, “I’d better get permission from the CO.” And so Chris said, “The CO’s all in favour of it.” And so they whacked these two poles up.

32:00 And there was a terrible row, and he ran it up, the CO rounded it up the… Chris Goy had said, “You know I can cater with most things, but,” he said, “What do you do with them padre?” And he said, “You can always ask he be removed from the area.” But he,

32:30 fortunately for him, he was a minister down the road here. And when Jean and I were married, I was able to get Chris, his church. And he went, he used to tell the story about over at the First World War, he was in the signals corps. I said to his daughter, he came and camped with us at Inverloch one time, and I said

33:00 to his daughter, “Was your father a padre in the First World War?” She said, “I don’t think so.” She said, “I think he spent most of the time at Umina. And then they were saying that he was with the signals people and they cart all their stuff along, and they were in Palestine. And they, horses would trot so far and then walk so far. They were…

33:30 And his horse became lame, and so he turned it out, there were loose horses there, and he turned his horse out, and it was a decent sort of a bay horse there. And it had a V on it, and so it was a, you know, the sand was about the same colour, so he mixed up some mud and rubbed this on it, and settled it up and away he went. And

34:00 he was half asleep and an officer’s cane came down over his shoulder, and ordered him off his horse. He’d stolen a 5th Battalion’s horse, and this particular, this officer made him, you know, take all of the gear off and let the horse go, and all the rest of it. And then, Chris used to,

34:30 all the reunions and one thing and another, and one year he was at this reunion, and that Slim was the governor, and he was there because he’d been an officer in the Middle East. And so when he got up to speak, he was there, “Thieving Australian here that stole one of my horses.” So everybody knew about it so they said, “Righto Chris.”

35:00 You see, so they got him and they sat him next to the governor. And he said, by this time he was with the AIM and he said, “I didn’t do the AIM any harm having stolen that horse,” he said. “I can get the governor to attend any function that the AIM were running.”

Were there any WAAAFs [Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force] based in Darwin when you were there?

No, there were a few

35:30 nurses at the hospital but there were no WAAAFs then. When I was at the showgrounds I was sent off in a truck to the Methodist Ladies College I think it was, to pick up a load of WAAAFs. I think they must have been there on training.

36:00 But there weren’t any there when we were there, there were only the few nurses at the hospital. But I was in the hospital for a couple of days but I don’t know why. I just got a note in my diary that I’d been in hospital, but I don’t know why I got into hospital.

Did you marry after the war, did you meet your wife after the war?

36:30 Yes, I didn’t meet her till well after the war.

But had you had a girlfriend?

1950, so I.

But had you had, had there been a lady in your life at all, by that stage?

Oh yes, I’d written to, some of the letters that I’d written to a girl, but she became my cousin afterwards.

37:00 But, both she and Jean are buried in the same grave, like they were both cremated. But the Tippett Brothers established a quite a memorial at Clunes, and one of my uncles had died before this was established, so you know, they made

37:30 you know, provisions for six people. It’s a big, granite thing with red granite piece over each grave, and my eldest uncle, he, my aunt wouldn’t, she said I want to leave her husband where he was. They were going to shift him and put him in this new thing. And so my eldest uncle, he always paid

38:00 two parts of this, like he was owner, and one for this uncle that didn't go in there. And after his death, his three daughters said to me, "Look, we're no longer Tippetts so you'd better have this deed for this grave up in Creswick." And,

38:30 but it didn't have the big, red granite thing. And then, oh just a few years ago, a couple of my cousins said, "Look, how about if we get that granite made, and we'll be cremated and have our ashes put in there." And so we agreed to that and had this,

39:00 like completed the memorial. And the only two people that are in there, ashes, are my wife and my cousin's wife. But she had become friendly, we weren't engaged or anything, she had become friendly with an American, and became engaged to him when I come back from Darwin. And

39:30 then, but then when he went back to America he left her. I never found out why she didn't go to America. But anyway, we were always great friends. And I told you about the cakes

40:00 haven't I? We used to get these cakes and the small ants used to get into them.

Tape 5

00:32 Queenslander, and we flew over his home and he said, "Take me jolly half a day to get back now." And when I got to the Brisbane aerodrome that we landed on, I said to somebody, "Where's the air force camp here?" And they said, "Oh hut over there." And so I went off to this hut, and there was a bomb shelter in front of the door and I went in one side, and there was a chap come in the other side, and he was a 42nd cousin of mine,

01:00 one of the Andersons from the mill at Smeaton. And I said to him, "Are there any planes going to Melbourne?" He was a flying instructor, and I said, "Any planes going to Melbourne?" And he said, "No," he said, "I go on leave, we got to go down on the dash train." So we went down on the troop train down, from Brisbane to Sydney,

01:30 and he said, "Oh, get on the express down there." He'd been up and down, he knew his way around. So I was on the express that night and we were home.

Well before, earlier on you mentioned the ants in the camp and how they got your cake. Can you tell us a bit more about the meat ants and the white ants?

Oh yes, I can tell you lots of stories about, have you got plenty of tape?

02:00 **Yeah, this one's the ant tape.**

Well we, wildlife was quite, you know, it was quite interesting up there, although they, of course, the sandflies and the mosquitoes we could have done without them.

02:30 The sandflies used to, you see they had high and low tides and when there was a high tide, it'd wash all the sandflies up and they'd go inland looking for something to do. And, but we, oh you know, we weren't anywhere near a medical place. I don't know where the nearest hospital was. But any rate, we found out that brake fluid was a good thing

03:00 to put on the insect bites. And there was a new doctor come up there and he got badly bitten with the sand flies and the mosquitoes and I recommended brake fluid to him, and he took a very dim view of it. But when we went to the Rapid Creek camp, there was a,

03:30 we set up various tents, and one of our crowd set up a tent under a beautiful tree and they had it all set up and they had a, oh, thing, horizontal thing, up about two or three feet off the ground, to tie their tent to and they were well set up. And then the found there were green ants up the tree. And these green ants, they would bite, they were

04:00 terribly vicious things. And they built a thing about as big as a coconut and they lived in that, on leaves. And, so they said, oh the green ants you see, we'll fix these green ants. So they got some hessian, soaked it in sump oil and tied that around the tree, and went off to bed. Oh no, they had a good lamp

04:30 and they hadn't been in there very long, and there were green ants in there, up above the lamp, because the lamp attracted the insects, and they were catching the insects and dropping them onto the floor. And there were other green ants going out with them. So they went out to see what was happening, and this horizontal piece of wood that they'd put there to tie their tent to was about six inches away from

05:00 the tree, and the green ants had made a bridge of ants bodies from the tree to there. And they never bit anybody in that tent. They were the only person I ever saw that made friends of the green ants. It's a, but they were a quite a thing, those green ants. Well then, there was the little

05:30 geckos, the little lizards, and they used to come in and they would go up side down, you know, run along the ceiling of the tent, or you know, along the top of the of the wall, after an insect. Jump off, grab the

insect and land back on the wall again, and they could walk on anything that was upside down, and jump and grab, and how they did it, we never really worked it out.

06:00 But there was one that some of them made, quite a lot friends with. He lived in their camp all the time.

And goannas, you mentioned there was a goanna in the slit trench, but were there many goannas?

They didn't seem to be so friendly, the goannas. But then it had, many of them about. But there was a white ants

06:30 **part, you know, they were big mounds in there, and there was one of our chaps, he used to go past this thing every day when he was going to breakfast. And he used to kick a hole in it. And the ants would have it all mended. So I think he kicked it, aimed, a whole lot next day. Aunty Al's busy to keep them out of his tent. And, of course**

07:00 **the, I told you about the, with the small ants getting into our tins of cake, and we couldn't keep them out no matter what you did and do. We finished up building a shelter near a meat ants' nest and putting the cakes there, because the meat ants couldn't get in and they wouldn't let the white, the little ants in. That was how we were able to have cake**

07:30 **without ant flavour then. But we used, we did fairly well with people sending us up stuff.**

Did you go into Darwin?

We used to go into Darwin, to the pictures. And these pictures were on at the, you had to take your own seat.

08:00 So we used to take a box in you see, to sit on. And every now and again, somebody in authority would have a clean up of these boxes, you see, they'd burn them all up and you'd go in there without box, you'd have to stand up. And of course, the screen was up so that you could sit on either side of the screen and see it either forwards or backwards. And it was, but

08:30 that was our only entertainment. Some of the, one of the drivers came home one day with a piano. I don't know where he found the piano, but it was a fairly old piano, but there was a chap in our camp, he was one of the drivers too, and he was quite musical and he got to this piano and tuned it and used to play it and it was quite a

09:00 thing. And the other people from music, somebody else brought home a gramophone and 12 records, but the spring was broken on the gramophone. So, we took, got an old windscreen wiper and made a, put a piece of rubber off an old

09:30 tube there, and drove the gramophone with these, with the windscreen wiper. They reckon we nearly wore the records out. I used to know what they were but I think I've forgotten what they were now, but they were quite popular records.

Do you remember what films you saw?

10:00 No, I think I might have recorded some in the diary but I can't remember what they were now, but they didn't need to be of high class to be of entertainment up there. But of course, they, the boys used to, they were silent films of course, and they used to cheer and carry on. And there

10:30 was a, oh, we never saw him, but there was a chap that was connected with the flying doctor up there. I don't think, it wasn't a flying doctor's plane that he had, he had a plane of his own. And they said that he once flew his plane between the projector and the screen and tipped her over and,

11:00 and he lost his licence and all sorts of things, for doing that. And I think that he was such a help to the people in the Territory, so they gave him his licence back again. And I forget what his name was now. They used to talk about him and some people that were, that knew something about the Territory.

So was there

11:30 **very much building going on in Darwin at all? I understand they rebuilt the wharf, is that right, after the initial bombing?**

I didn't have much to do with the wharf, but you see there was a ship loaded with ammunition and the Japs bombed that, and of course it not only made a mess of the ship but it wrecked the wharf. But I suppose the army would have done that. Or some of the,

12:00 or it might have been, I think the army would have taken that all on. But being a member of the Darwin Defenders Association, I meet up with people with all stories, and there was one chap that I know pretty well, and he was on the boom ship. See they had a boom across the harbour and they had a, they had a boat

12:30 to open it and close it. And so that was a fairly dangerous operation because the Japs didn't like them doing that. But fortunately there was enough ack ack to keep them up so they weren't very accurate. I don't think they ever did the boom any harm. They tried to and it made it exciting for them, but they

were a tremendous lot of people that were lost up there on the

13:00 first raid. And the numbers are, people that were, you know, that were there in the army, they said that the numbers that had been reported have never ever been anywhere near as, because first of all they didn't count the Aborigines. And then there were a lot of people working up there, a lot of funny people lived up in Darwin before the war, and those had

13:30 the wharfies, well some of them were terrible characters. There was, well the chappie that was on the, that I met, that had been in charge of the light houses, he said that you couldn't rely on getting anything that you'd ordered because the wharfies would break the cases open to see if there was anything in there, that was any good, and if it was only lighthouse stuff, they'd throw it overboard.

14:00 And he said, he'd seen the, it was beer come up on the railway, and when they'd be, or also it'd come on the boat, and they were loading it on the railway. And, on the cattle trucks, and there'd be someone with a tin underneath and they'd dump the crate of beer in, on the truck, and one fellow would catch it underneath.

14:30 They were pretty good if they could drink beer that had been filtered through the bottom of a railway train, of a cattle truck.

What about other trading, black market trading that might have gone on?

Oh, the worst of it happened in our camp.

15:00 But when the Yanks came up there of course, they were great fellows for buying anything and they paid good money for it. And our revolvers that we didn't, we didn't have one until we'd been up there for three months, and then we only had ten rounds of ammunition, and told not to try it out because that was the only ammunition they had for them. And that they were on our charge at seven pounds each, seven pounds 10, I think.

15:30 And the Yanks would pay 20 or 30 pounds for them, you see. So it wasn't safe to leave your revolver down, because someone would sell it to a Yank. Our camp was starting to run out of revolvers. And there was, there was one chap... They eventually,

16:00 you know, people were going to buy another revolver, you know, pay the seven pound for another revolver, and they eventually got the Americans to get all their people to register all the firearms they had, whether they were private or not. And of course they found out that all the Smith and Wessons were in the Yank camp. And so they said to the Yanks, "Where did you get them?" And they said, "Oh we bought them

16:30 from an air force officer." And our crowd, the drivers used to wear a cap that looked like a, they didn't have the air force cap they had a cap that looked like an officers cap. And so it wasn't long before the service police were into our camp to find out who was selling these revolvers to the Yanks.

17:00 And they found two or three of the chaps in the camp. And so up for court martial for selling property, government property. One of them got off because they had his number wrong, his identification number was wrong, and another chap was there and he admitted that he had sold them to the Americans. And he said that there was no, that we'd bought them for seven pound 10, and there was no, nothing on them to say

17:30 that they were, military. They said, "Oh there's a number on them." And he said, "Yes, but that's a, just a serial number of the manufacturers." And they said, "But you can't sell a revolver in civil life." And he said, "Yes I can, here's my gun dealers licence." He was from a sideshow people in South Australia and he had this gun dealers licence.

18:00 Discharged. So he got off on the, there was one chap and he finished up, he was one of the chaps that had come back from Ambon, and I finished up putting him in the clink. And his cockatoo of course, he couldn't take his cockatoo to the clink. And the chap in there that was always going to wring it's neck was the fellow that looked after it till he came back.

18:30 But there wasn't much that happened in our camp, but there was a chappie that I met at Sale, I met him afterwards. And he, I had some trouble with my gas producer when I was at Sale. We went to Melbourne one time and coming back home, a car load of us, and coming back home

19:00 the bottom fell out of one of these filters, that rusted out. And so it just short circuited it straight onto the engine, and got back home alright. And I had a job to start it, and by this time I'd bought this place at Inverloch and I was going down to Inverloch to see how many days off, days leave, and there was another chap said he'd go with me. And so away we went, and it wasn't going too well and we got to Inverloch,

19:30 and we couldn't get it started to get home. And we were with this, this cousin of my aunts that was there, and he had the farm next door, and so he ran us home. I don't know what it did to his petrol because, or whether he was running on some of this good kerosene or not, I don't know. But I got back to the camp and you know, I was a bit downhearted I couldn't get the car to start.

20:00 And by this time I'd put a new filter on it, but it was because of what we'd done to it before that it was

all gummed up. And Arthur Fry, he said to me, “Don’t worry about your old car,” he said, “When you get a chance, get down to Inverloch again, buy yourself some kerosene and get some kerosene, take all of the oil out of the sump and fill it up with kerosene.

20:30 Take the spark plugs up and fill it up with kerosene. Get the handle out and wind it until it goes a bit easy and then start it up with the kerosene still in the sump, and run it until it sounds as though it’s going to fall to pieces. Take the kerosene out of the sump, put some oil in it, change that oil and put some other oil in it. It’ll be right.” And it was too. And so, he said,

21:00 I said, “How’d you know about the kerosene?” And he said, “Well, there’s two things I,” he said, “I used to race a Norton motorbike,” he said. “And I always gave it a dose of kerosene before the race.” And he said, “You know my Norton was gong better than anybody else’s Norton.” And he worked for the Shell company and they had big Leyland trucks, and when you opened them up, there was goo stuck to the sump, about half an inch thick.

21:30 But he said, they used to say in the workshop, “How is it that you, that you’re always clean and we always get all these dirty ones? But,” he said, “I never told them. But,” he said, “I used to have to watch it. I used to always give it a dose of kerosene before it.” And he said, “They used to watch me but I used to beat the, they never found out what I did to it.” And then the managing director of Shell was their head officer was in

22:00 Melbourne at that time, and he was going to Sydney, it was just after the war started. And Arthur was still with the Shell company, and so seeing as he was a great man with motor bikes and one way or the other, well, so they gave him the CO’s car to tune up before he went to Sydney. “So,” he said, “I gave it a dose of kerosene. And when,” he said, “When the boss came back

22:30 he came down and thanked me and he said that his car had gone better than it ever gone. He would have sacked me if he’d have known what I’d done to it.” Well then, he was a 2E, that was an engine fitter, and when he left Sale, he was with a squadron that were based in Adelaide. And they were ferrying stuff to New Guinea, and they used to call into Brisbane and then, not Brisbane,

23:00 further up, Townsville I think it was, and then to New Guinea, that is to get refuelled. And they were not only carting the good air force stuff up but they used to take a certain amount of whiskey to sell to the Yanks. And it was quite a trade this, and they, when they were, when they landed in New Guinea on one

23:30 occasion, all the next day, when they went to service the engines, they were, oil was all jelly and there was, oh a terrible fuss about it. And they found out that when they’d been serviced at Townsville, that they’d put glycol in instead of, in with the oil. And glycol was

24:00 a brake fluid instead of oil and it had made jelly of the oil when it had cooled. And so they said all the engines would have to be taken off these planes and one thing and another. And anyway, Fry told his pilot not to come near the thing, he was going to fix the plane or he was going to do something to it, he was going to have a look at it. So he went over to see the Yanks and

24:30 got four gallons of kerosene from the Yanks, and he, you know, dug some of the oil out and then he got some business and then did the same trick as he’s always done with the kerosene. And eventually had the engine running very well and he said to the, to his pilot, “You better come down

25:00 and we’ll give this, this plane a flight test.” And so it was going very well and he said if the rest of them didn’t do him over the officers do, did him to find out what he did. But he said, “I didn’t want to be thrown out of the air force so I didn’t tell them.” But his was the only plane, the rest of the planes were all laid up, and they were still flying backwards and forwards and it didn’t interfere with their trade with the Yanks

25:30 he said. But there was another story about the Yanks. They were going up, there was a chap going back, he’d been on leave and he was going back to New Guinea and he had an umbrella, and there was a Yank in the carriage was sort of chiacking him, an army chap with an umbrella, you see.

26:00 So he said, “Oh, you’ve got to have an umbrella in New Guinea.” And he finished up selling the Yank this old brown umbrella for a bottle of whiskey and some other things. And he made quite a trade out of the umbrella. I think he got about 100 dollars out of the umbrella. And a bottle of whiskey.

26:30 **I was going to ask you about the Americans and their air force base. How much contact? It sounds like you had a lot of contact with them.**

Well, I didn’t have much contact with them, but of course the drivers, they used to have a fair amount of contact with them and they’d come back with all sorts of funny stories about what was going on.

27:00 But I really should have been with the construction company because they had a lot to do with them. And there was a chap that was with us one time, he was with the construction companies down about Adelaide River, he was. And he said that the construction company that he was with, they’d all been recruited from country roads board people, you know, and they were all good, wild men.

27:30 That’s the only way they could get the best out of them. The beer supply was a bit short they had to have it whether there was anything doing or not. And this chap was saying about the sergeant we had

at one stage, and he was down with this lot, and then he and his WO mate must have got on the booze in his tent one night and talking about different things, and

28:00 one reckoned he could shoot better than the other. So the one fellow shot the end off the other fellows cigar. And they said the military police raced out, they said, “Where was that shot?” And they said, “Down in the, where the construction fellows were.” And they said, “We’ll go down there in the morning.” There was another chap had been with one of

28:30 these crowds, and they used to go buffalo hunting you see. They were down about the right place to go buffalo hunting, and they used to go buffalo hunting. And there was some Yanks there and they had some guns that would take the 303 bullets but they had run out of bullets. And by this time there was plenty of ammunition in the Territory so this chap said, “Oh, I’ll get you a case of 303.”

29:00 You see, and was, so they said, “Well what do you want to swap for it?” And they said, “We can do with a jeep.” So they finished up with a jeep, they swapped a case of 303 bullets for a Yank jeep. And they didn’t have it near the camp, they kept it out in the bush and they used to go buffalo hunting, and all sorts of things in this jeep, the Yank jeep.

29:30 But we, oh that was another thing that we used to use for making foreigners, was buffalo horns. You could make serviette rings out of them. And I think I might have a couple in the drawer here, that are made out of buffalo horn.

Sounds like there was a lot of time when there wasn’t much to do, is that right?

Oh no, this would in your day, you’d have a day or a half

30:00 a day off, you see. You worked for seven days a week and sometimes you’d get a day off, and if there were two or three of you getting day off, we’d go buffalo hunting. But that didn’t last very long, we lost our good conveyance.

And did you ever shoot any buffalo?

Only frightened some once. But we got down to, to Maranboy Station

30:30 and there were Aborigines still there, and we saw one of their, they were having a corroboree and it was quite a thing to see. But one of the Aborigines went with us, so he knew where the buffalo were, but all we did was frighten them. But there were, there was a crowd went down and they did get a buffalo and brought it, brought the steaks back home, and so we had buffalo steak.

31:00 It was quite a good meal, but of course we didn’t have the facilities to keep stuff there. And I, when I came back, I went to Sale, and I was down at Sale for quite a long time. In ’44 I went back up the Territory again.

So how did you come to be posted to Sale?

31:30 Oh well, they changed us around you see. In the air force you got shifted around individually if you, if there was two of us sent off we were, replacements came up 13, we’d been there for 13 months, you were supposed to be there for 12 months. But we were there for 13 months and our replacements came up and we caught a plane to Brisbane and then,

32:00 then back on the rail to Melbourne, so we got home pretty smartly. But then we got, I got word to go to Sale, report and go to Sale, and down there, and they had just moved from Bairnsdale, the Sale aerodrome used to be at Bairnsdale.

32:30 And it was a fairly new and we were billeted in what looked like a house but it had no rooms in it. It was just the outside shell and the roof, but I think it’s been made into a barracks since, because they’ve still got that aerodrome at Sale. And it was a training ground and they had, oh, planes there that were built in Australia.

33:00 And a lot of, there were a tremendous lot of accidents, a lot of people were killed at Sale. And there was one of our chaps, I said that he was a trainee undertaker, he was, you know, forever driving to the, ferrying these chaps. And they were both the bombers that were built in, I think most of them were built in Melbourne, and they never

33:30 found out, didn’t know for a long time what went wrong with them. And the aircrews used to, the ground crews used to argue the point, and the fitters would blame the riggers and the riggers would blame the fitters, and nobody would go in these planes except if the crews were forced into them, were mustered into them.

34:00 But one of them eventually landed in a swamp and they found out that there was a mistake made in one of the controls of the tails, and that there was a tube and it had a nut on the end of it, and the thread was cut too deep and these things used to sheer off, and once it sheered off, the things

34:30 just went straight in.

Do you remember what the name of the plane is?

The Beaufighter. They were very bad name up to that time, but of course, once they found out what was wrong with them it was very easily cured. But things were very bad at Sale, and the CO down there, he rounded us all up one night to tell us that there was

35:00 nothing unusual for trainees to be killed. But then they, my mate Sammy Jose, he was a sergeant, but I'd been up in Darwin for 13 months and he hadn't been in the air force that long, but he'd been in Sale and he became a sergeant and I wasn't even a corporal then, or I was but I hadn't been notified.

35:30 But he had a good tenor voice and, he used to organise the concert, they had concerts at Sale. We used to have a lot of fun and games with these concerts, and Sammy said that you know, "Organising a concert was quite alright unless you had two comedians." And he said, "If you had two comedians," he said, "It was a disaster because they had no sense of humour, comedians."

36:00 And then he would organise the concerts and then they would scream out for him to come out you see, and he didn't intend to be on the program, but they wouldn't.… And one night we went into a lodge, I belonged to a Masonic lodge just before I went into the air force, and we used to go the

36:30 Masonic lodges. And we went there one night and the CO was there, and so they had Sammy to sing, and there was a bus that was going back to the air force, and so the CO said to Sam, "Look, I won't be taking my car out to the drome tonight, you can stay here until the end of the turnout." It was a dinner. "And you can take the car back."

37:00 So, there were three or four of us stayed back with Sammy, and we went back in the CO's car. And when we went in through the gate, we had our overcoats on and Sammy pulled his up, you know, up around his ears, and he was driving the car and the guard gave us the salute. He'd have locked us all up if he'd have known that we had the, that we were coming home in the CO's car.

37:30 We would have had a lot of explaining to do. It was there of course, that I met Arthur Fry. And I was there for quite a while and it came harvest time when I was there, and somebody said to me, "Oh, you can get harvest leave to…" By this time of course I had the farm

38:00 as well. So I got this harvest leave, they told me, "Oh," they said, "You've applied too late." But I did get some, a week or twos leave. But then I, sometime during, I must have been there nearly 12 months I think, because I said, I thought I'll put in for harvest leave again, and I didn't know where I'd be.

38:30 And by this time they decided I could do with another stint up in the Territory, and so I, we went to Number 1Hardening School. They thought, the air force, you know, the technical people of it were getting a bit too soft, you see, so they had

39:00 the Number 1Hardening School, was at Wonga Park. And up and down hills, and they had two characters there that I think the air force, that the army must have given them away to the air force. And they'd been broken in a bit by the time, I think we were about the second intake into this hardening school, but the first intake were, low and behold the fellows that were,

39:30 Mobile Works camp, you know. They took it a bit badly, they were going to be hardened because they worked like trojans you know. And they said the Americans used to call them the chain gang because, you know, they'd work, and so long as they got plenty of grog to keep them going. So they landed at

40:00 this hardening school and they took a lot of the steam out of these chaps before we got there. And we, I don't know, we had a bit of time there. And then we were sent to the, I was sent to the Melbourne Cricket Ground. That was the depot for people going north again, and so I had another trip in the Ghan.

Tape 6

00:33 When I came down on leave from Darwin, because I met Dave Anderson and he was coming down on leave too, so we came down on the train together from Brisbane, having got to Brisbane on the plane. And so I was home in three days, it took 10 days to get me up there, but I got home in three.

01:00 And when I got home, I found out that when I got back, I was staying with my sister and brother in law in Melbourne, and that we'd had, we both had word that this place was on offer down at Inverloch. And I think it was about four pound an acre, and so we decided we'd go down there.

01:30 And of course, this was June when I came back from Darwin, it was the middle of winter, and we went down there. The agents made arrangements for us to go down there but none of the agents were going down because they didn't have many, have much petrol. We went down and stayed with Harv Anderson, and my uncle went with me.

02:00 And they found horses for Bill, and I went out to have a look at this place you see, and it was a shocking day. I don't know whether you've ever been to Inverloch on a bad day, but it rained and hailed and blew, and we had a bit of a look and got wet through and frozen, and decided we'd go home. And we went home and I said, "Oh make them an offer

02:30 well below what they're looking for and we'll come back and have another look at it just to show that we're still interested in it." So I made them an offer of a pound an acre for it. And in three days time they rang up and said would I come and sign up for it. So we had four and a half thousand acres. And I was in the air force and Bill was in munitions and I didn't know what do to next.

03:00 But there was a chap on it and we found out that he'd been manpowered on it, so we kept him manpowered on it and he was quite good. And then of course, we used to go, come and go to see it. I used to come up from Sale to see it, I got posted to Sale. And that was how the, I got it stuck there with the car and the gas producer, and

03:30 Bill, he eventually got released from the munitions to go on, to go farming again. He was farming down at, his father and his grandfather and his great, great grandfather had been farming down near at Geelong, at Ceres, and of course, Bill had been farming before the war.

04:00 And he got released from that and they sold the house that they had in Essendon, which wasn't in a very good place. I'd been with them when they bought it. And it was about the end of the runway at Essendon, so as the war got, it was a risky place to be. Any rate they sold this house and they bought one adjoining the country

04:30 down at Inverloch. And they went down there with a furniture van with all their goods, only to find there was a bush fire down there and it had burnt the house, there was only ashes there. But fortunately the chap, Mr Acres who was the agent down there that they'd bought the house through, he put them into another house that was only to be sold it wasn't to be let, but he leased it to them.

05:00 Then Bill built a house himself on the part that he had and that had Tom Winall on, he lived on the other half. Now the house that was on the cliffs of Inverloch, the place was called The Cliffs, at Inverloch, the house had been built there by

05:30 the first town clerk of Melbourne. And he built that there for his son and he'd also, he must have selected a piece there earlier on, because there was a little block of 13 acres, and when we sold the place, we'd just built a new house there about five years before we sold it. I was down there for 20 years.

06:00 And so we kept this 13 acres, and now Margie and her husband have got that, Margie and Peter have got that. And they were thanking me for it a while ago, and I said, "It was one of the best deals ever I made. I didn't have to build a house on it." And we spent a fair amount of time down there and they go down there nearly every weekend when they are home.

Just before we leave Darwin,

06:30 **I'll just ask you a few more things about Darwin. One of them is about the sort of vehicles you were repairing and maintaining.**

Oh, the vehicles. Oh, a lot of them had been impressed vehicles. You see they we were pretty short of goods and services and when the war broke out, you see we'd sent a lot of good stuff to

07:00 to Europe and there was very little stuff that we had there. Probably the Japs could have walked in if they'd have known what we had. They needn't have brought their, could have beaten us off with a stick. But the air force themselves, the people that had been brought up in the air force, they had great knowledge of

07:30 the Austin trucks. But no knowledge at all of Fords or Chevs or anything like that, and of course we had impressed vehicles and they were all breeds. And we had trucks that were, I don't think there were many Austins, or there were some Austins amongst them.

What are impressed vehicles?

08:00 They were private vehicles. You see when the people left Darwin, they were taken away by train, and they left their motor vehicles behind and we had, and they were put in, the army took charge of them, to look after them. And that if the air force or the army wanted any, well they had to impress them. That was they had to buy them from the

08:30 Department, and then of course, they were, that was accredited to the people that owned the vehicle. So they had the pick of any vehicles that were in this park. And that was the impressed vehicles, but we used to go and get them occasionally. Get, you know, not for our own use, but we used to tip a few over to get springs off them.

09:00 When the army weren't looking.

So they were all housed in a…?

Yes, they were all housed in a paddock. And the army were supposed to look after them.

What, guard them?

Yes, but they were too busy to do that half the time.

So these were just normal cars were they? Just Holdens and Fords?

09:30 Oh yes, just normal. Oh no, Holden's weren't going before the war were they?

No.

No. There was a chap giving a, and he was up in court and he said, he'd defend himself and he made the point that there were three sorts of

10:00 truth. And he said when you gave the oath you said you'd tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So we better keep it right. You better scrub the Holdens.

10:30 **No, there weren't any Holdens. You tell me, you're the expert here, what were they?**

Well, there were Ford but they were brutes of things to work on because they had a distributor in underneath the, at the end of the crank shaft, and it was in behind the radiator and the radiator fan, and you had to lean over the, lean over to get to them. But there was a

11:00 fire truck, I think it was, that had been knocked about with the first bombing in the drome, and it was out in our good camp, out at the 10 mile. And when we had nothing better to do, we used to work on this thing to try and get it to go again because it would be quite handy and if we got it going. And so it was in a bad way, and there was one chap,

11:30 he did a lot of work on it and he reckoned he had it right, and so he took it for a run down the road and when he went to stop it, it wouldn't stop. He'd done the brakes up and all the rest of it. But it had a brake assisted with a, on it, and there was a, when he eventually got back with the thing,

12:00 he pulled it to pieces and found that there was a wasp had built a nest in the pipe and it had blocked the vacuum off. And so the brakes wouldn't go on. And there were all sorts of things like that. And when I first went there with them, a chap said, "Could I solder?" And I said, "Oh yes, I can solder." Then he said, "Well come around here." And there was a stack about,

12:30 about four feet high of radiators that had had shrapnel through them. That's what I had, my first job at the 10 mile was to solder these radiators up. So I used to solder them up, and then one night, after I'd been there for a while, there was a chap, I don't know what his Christian name was, but he was always known as Mac. He was

13:00 MacKinlay, I think was his name, but he was always known as Mac. And old Mac was there and he said, "I was going to finish the job." He was putting a new radiator in, he'd got a radiator out of a car and he'd a put a new radiator in the vehicle, going to go and finish it after tea. And there was no light there and so I said, "I'll go and give you a hand Mac." He was camped in the same hut as I was. And

13:30 so when we got down there, we finished putting the radiator in, he got a bucket of water and put it in, it had been shrapnelled, had gone through the thing when it had been stored in the store, and then he abused me about this radiator. He was blaming me for the radiator being crook. I said, "You cranky old fool." And it was he that I'd found out, that he'd been,

14:00 he and two others had been in hospital in Darwin with meningitis and the other two had died, and they'd sent Mac up to Darwin, and he wasn't properly over it and was taking five or six number nine pills that nearly, one of them would nearly kill any person. And so I said, "Mac, look

14:30 you take my water bottle with a scale boy in it and try that. Take it for a fortnight and see if it does you any good." And it worked wonders with Mac. And whether it was that he drank more water or whether it was the scale boy or not, I don't know, but it made a big difference to him and it altered his temperament and all.

Well now's a good time to talk about the scale boy.

15:00 **You better tell us about it.**

Yes well, the scale boy was invented by a chap, Hartley Abbott. He'd been a, he'd been at the First World War, he was at Gallipoli, and once when he was there, he was a mining engineer, he'd studied mining engineering. And he was, he reckoned they could put a bank across one of the waddies

15:30 and they would get enough water to slush the Turks out. Now this is recorded in Dr Bean's history of the First World War. And, but whether the Turks got to know about it or not, but anyway, poor old Hartley got filled up with shrapnel. And he was sent back to England, and he was a chap of an inventive turn of mind, and when he got out of hospital he got into the inventions branch

16:00 of the British Army. And he had an idea that he could improve the trench mortars, and he was doing that. And then while he was in there he went, when he was on leave one time, he went into the aquarium and he noticed the electric eels tank was crystal clear, and so he said to

16:30 to somebody about it, had they cleared it out, and they said, "Oh no, the electric eel always keeps his tank like that." And he thought well now that's a good idea. And so he set to work after the war to make a synthetic electric eel, because he was a mining engineer, and in those days the mines were mostly

driven by steam engines and

17:00 the water was usually fairly foul, and they would build up in the boilers, the corrosion in the water. And so he made these and it was quite a success, and I had proof that it was a success. I met him, how I came to meet him was that there was a cousin of my mother's who

17:30 was a grazier, a bachelor grazier. He used to come to Melbourne to do business, and when he was in Melbourne he used to stay at Scots Hotel in Collins Street. There's an insurance company that has got the building, the block now. And so Jim was down in Melbourne and he didn't go to the football and he didn't go to the races, and he was there on a Saturday and he was a bit miserable, and there was another chap there and he said to Jim, he said, "You don't look too

18:00 well, old man." And he said, "No," he said, "I'm no good at all. I can't find out what's wrong with me." And so this chap said to him, "Well would you be prepared to stay in Scots Hotel for a fortnight drinking and bathing in water that I prepare." And Jim thought he'd done some funny things in the Scots Hotel but he'd never stayed there to drink water before. So he stayed there for a fortnight, and he was a new man by the end of it. And my uncle and I met him at the

18:30 Ballarat sheep market and you know, we used to often meet him and noticed what had happened to him, and so he told us about how he'd met this chap, Hartley Abbott, and the scale boy. And so then we met up with Hartley and he was living at Scots Hotel. He had, after the war,

19:00 he had got a job with a merchant banker, and this merchant banker was the only one of his family, there were none of the family left, they'd either been killed at war or died or, something. And when he died, he left the bank to the three people that were employed there, and Hartley was one of them. And then he had the merchant bankers job. What he did

19:30 was to finance railway bridges anywhere in the world. And Hartley, being an engineer, he, of course he used to be sent out to either supervise or approve of these bridges that were being built. So he'd travelled all over the world after the war, and thoroughly enjoyed it. And he had the scale boy

20:00 going. And he was in the Arctic one time, and it was in the winter time, in the dark, and he had these, they were mining, oh radium, pitch blend, or was it radium, I think it was. And they, the mine was, it was, frozen

20:30 down about 60 feet. And he got two of these scale boys and shook them, and he said it lit an aura all around his body, and he said they never saw some of the Eskimos for about a fortnight. And, but the air was so crystal clear that there was nothing the stuff didn't escape. And then

21:00 I, and of course this was before the war, and then when, and made some of them to, they were made to go in, for purifying water to prevent corrosion in steam boilers. And the day that I went into the air force there was a chap from up in the Bendigo district, and he was working on a mine, he was a boiler

21:30 attendant, and I knew there was a scale boy fitted to this mine. And so I said to him, "You got some funny thing fitted to your mine." And he said, "Yes it's a thing called a scale boy." And he said, "12 months ago," he said, "When the mine closed down and everything, at Christmas time, and the boiler was cool they took a plate off the bottom of the boiler and seeing as though I was the smallest boiler attendant, they stuffed me in there

22:00 to knock the scale out." And he said, "I was three days in the boiler knocking the stuff out of it." And he said, "Just this year," like went in about February or March I think, when we were called up, and he said, "This year," he said, "When they closed it down, they took the plate off the bottom of the boiler," he said, "And there was about a barrel load of stuff just came straight out of the boiler."

So what are the magical properties of the scale boy that...?

22:30 It generates a static charge. But what the static charge is I don't know. But Hartley, he was killed, he also brought to Australia, when he came to Australia, back to Australia after the war sometime, not long before the Second World War, and he called in to see his brother in New Guinea, in New Zealand, and

23:00 the brother there wrote to another brother in Bendigo and said that Hartley had been there with his mumbo jumbo water works. But that man did a lot of medical research into it and I finished up getting three volumes of stuff that he published and the things

23:30 that I showed you today were, you know, extracts out of that, out of those books.

Can you tell us what the components of the scale boy are?

Yes, the scale boy is a globe, like an electric light globe, and I think the original one looked more like an electric light globe but it's more a globe than a, then a long thing like

24:00 an electric light globe. And it has a bead of mercury, and various gases are in it, some of them, and I've got one here that had neon gas in it and when you shake that in the dark, it lights up with the neon gas. Some of them are made, he made them for various,

24:30 he made them so that they'd give off light in various wavelengths. There were some with the ultra violet

and some with the infra red, so that the ultra violet ones would destroy and the infra red would propagate anything. And the one that's now used,

25:00 it started off it's used for medical purposes. It was about in the middle of the range, but how they came by it being good for medical purposes was that, that they had a tap on these things for breathing the air out of it. And people got drinking the water out of this tap, and people with rheumatism and all sorts of things reckoned that

25:30 they were getting better. And Hartley used to say that if you weren't too well, it was often that you, I don't know whether it was your kidneys, got fouled up and then they fouled your liver up, or your liver got fouled up and it fouled the kidney up. And then he said you could, you could name it and you could have it, but if you kept your kidneys and your liver right,

26:00 you could keep good health. Now, I think that I'm the only one in the family that's taken these things seriously and I'm now the elder of the family. And I was a miserable kid, so whether it's the scale boy or whether it was the frights that I got up in Darwin, I don't know that did me so much good. But that was, and then Hartley also brought out

26:30 the idea of hydroponics. And he gave it to his friend, Victor Leggo, who was making chemicals in Bendigo. Victor Leggo was making chemicals from the various stuff out of the mines in Bendigo, extracting it. And so, then I had a garden going at one time up in Darwin,

27:00 and we had peas and beans and tomatoes all growing, and then the dry season came in and we lost the whole dash lot. So we set up a, I set up a hydroponics. I said I'll beat this, so I set up the hydroponic, and then we shifted to, another camp and there wasn't any room to take my hydroponics things with me.

27:30 So I didn't have much success with that.

But you took a scale boy with you?

Yes. There was amongst the various things that he did, he had a scale boy outfit for cars and one of them went into the, into the radiator hose to treat the water, and another one of them went into the fuel to treat the fuel, and

28:00 I had one of these. And they had a little pear shaped scale boy, and I was able to make a thing so, out of a push bike spoke, so that I could fasten this to the cork of my water bottle and it would just go into the water bottle. And I had that in my water bottle and that was a, how I had, I was

28:30 never ever crook with water. I was only ever in hospital for two or three days I don't know what happened to me that I got to hospital. I suppose I should check up with my medical in the air force, they'll have it, so it'll be there somewhere. But, and that was the scale boy that I lent to Mac, and whether it was that he drank a

29:00 lot more water, or whether it was that the scale boy. But I have an idea that it was the scale boy because there were people, when you shifted from one camp to another or along the railway or one thing and another, and you got drinking different water, that upset some people no end, and I was never upset with water, drinking water out of my scale boy. And I've been drinking it ever since.

29:30 And people say oh, mumbo jumbo. And there was a great friend of mine, his father had the station, the Trawalla Station, up Trawalla near Bowfin. And Alistair, he was educated at Melbourne University as an engineer and then he went to Cambridge. And

30:00 his father was bringing him home from Cambridge and they were, came through America, and they came to New Zealand and who should get on the boat at New Zealand but Hartley Abbott, and they were, and Alistair's father was Engineer Commander Mackenzie, and if you addressed him as Mr Mackenzie, he was liable to look down

30:30 at you and say, "Engineer Commander." And if you addressed him as Engineer Commander, he'd probably yarn to you for half a day and he was a most interesting character. And he was in with Hartley Abbott, he had a lot to do with Hartley. And, but Alistair was never too sure whether it was, whether it was true science or whether it

31:00 was mumbo jumbo, but he still had a great interest in it. But we lost Alistair about two years ago, but it was quite an interesting thing. But then I was speaking to Alistair's son recently and he's also a high class university man, and he said that

31:30 he'd been through is father's papers, and he said that they'd had a lot of mistakes trying to make the scale boys out here. And when Hartley, he was killed, he was living at Scots Hotel, went out on a tram to Box Hill to a persons place out there that had a fairly big back yard and he had scale boy.

32:00 Scale boy, not scale boy, he had hydroponics troughs out there that, and he was, one was scale boy and one without, and was showing the difference that you could get. And he was going out there one Saturday, to this place, he got off the tram and he'd only got off the tram and a disreputable truck killed

him against a post.

32:30 And although it was all, it was classed as an accident, people that was close to him, they didn't believe it was any accident, because he had a remarkable knowledge of Europe. And he had people in Europe that would be using scale boys and were interested in it and he'd been to the university

33:00 in Germany, after the war. And we, and then, Frank Stevenson, Hartley had chosen him as the chap to look after the stuff for him in Australia. And Frank, I don't know what happened to Frank,

33:30 but I was away, down at Inverloch for 20 years, and I didn't see that much of Frank Stevenson for that time because I was working pretty long hours down there when I got out of the air force.

34:00 And then Frank died when, Frank died and then his widow, it was after we went up to Nurrabiel that his widow went into a home, she became almost blind and she went into a home and all the stuff, scale boy stuff was sold.

34:30 And fortunately the chappie that was doing, that used to do the books for them, rang me up and told me that this sale was on and so my wife and I went over in the car, we took one car load home, and then had to go back the next day for another car load of stuff. And I don't know whether this is stuff that was rejected or whether it's good or bad or indifferent, but.

Did you use scale boys at all

35:00 **in your work in the air force?**

Well, I had it in my water bottle.

Was that all, was that the only application?

Yes, that was all, that was enough.

So when you'd come back to Melbourne from Darwin, you'd finished your 13 months in Darwin, remember, and then you came back to Melbourne, how much leave did you have?

Oh, I don't think I had much more than about a week, 10 days or,

35:30 I don't know, I haven't recorded that. I gave up writing my diary when I got to Melbourne. And then I went to Sale, and I don't know whether I've got the exact date of when I went to Sale or when I landed in Melbourne. But I went down to Sale and I went down there for five or six months. And then I was sent back, you know, I'd have harvest leave

36:00 and then sent back up to Sale and then I put in for harvest leave the next year.

What was harvest leave?

Oh well, you could go down onto the farm and give a hand for harvest time, for making grass hay and that sort of thing. And so I took advantage of that. I think I got about a fortnight's leave for harvest leave and then I put in for more,

36:30 and then in the meantime they sent me to the hardening school, and then back up to, up to the Northern Territory again. But where we landed in the Northern Territory, it was a camp not far from the, the Elsie station on the Roper River. It was oh, a few miles away and we went there one time for

37:00 leave, on leave, and swam in the Roper River with the crocodiles. The Aborigines were there and assured us that they were only fish eating crocodiles. And so, but it was a big camp there, and they had everything that opened and shut. By this time it was 1944

37:30 and they had lathes and drilling machines and electric welders and you name it and you could, you could find it, and the old chap that was CO of it, he was, I think they said he'd been a technical school principal and he was running it, and so I thought I'd better find out

38:00 you know, as to whether I was to get this harvest leave or not when I got up there. And so I went to see him and he gave me a great lecture about it and told me that the camp was run as an air force camp, it shouldn't be run as all the rest. And I didn't get much from him and when I went back to the workshop, there was a warrant officer there and

38:30 a permanent, he'd been a permanent air force man and he knew all the tricks about the trade and so he said to me, "How did you get on with old Splash?" They used to call the CO Splash because if you got him too excited you had to stand to one side. And so I was, I said, "Well not too good." He said, "Were you satisfied with what he told you?" And I said, "Well not really." So he said, "Come in here,

39:00 into the office." And he got a book, air force law, like a Webster's dictionary and he turned it over and he said, "There, redress of grievance." There was, he turned this up and he said, "Now, you read that and then fill it in, fill in the papers." And it said that if you weren't satisfied with what your CO had told you that you could,

39:30 you could fill in this form, a redress of grievance. And that had to go to the area officer commanding,

and the area officer commanding only had three days to answer it, and if you weren't satisfied with what he said, you could also fill in another one, and go to Victoria Barracks and they only had three days to answer you, if you weren't satisfied with what they told you

40:00 you could go to King George himself. So I filled this thing in, and on this character's instructions and I said to him, "Well, it's said now that you've got to parade me to the adjutant," he said. "You go to the adjutant yourself," he said. "Away you go." So away I went to the adjutant, and adjutant had one look at this thing and I was in to

40:30 see the CO and the CO went red in the face, and said to the area officer commander, "He'll deal with you in..." So I said, "If he feels fit to deal with me, I feel fit to take it." And went off and left him. And then the, one of the drivers came home and said, "Oh you're in luck Tip. The area officer is away." And I said, "Fair go,

41:00 wait till he comes home." And he came home and I was on a plane out of the Territory very smartly. And back onto the farm and then I got word to say that...

Tape 7

00:33 **What was this hardening school, you were sent off to hardening school?**

Oh hardening school, yes well they thought that people that were, technically, they didn't do enough exercise, so good hardening school would be the good thing for them. And they, air force established this hardening school,

01:00 up at, can't think of the name of the place now, any rate it was up hill and down dale and they used to run us up and down these hills, it didn't last very long. But I don't know whether it did us much good but they had a lot of good ideas to, you know, to make the airmen more efficient.

01:30 And they also thought that the NCOs, non commissioned officers, they didn't do enough for keeping things right in the area of discipline and so they had, they set up a school

02:00 at the racecourse in Melbourne. I was never in it but I knew some fellows that had been at it, and there was an old CO there, he was an old character and he said, you know, drilling them in air force law, you see, so that they could keep the air force right, and they came back from these schools, a wealth

02:30 of knowledge. Because they'd not only been taught what the boys should do and what they shouldn't do and how to avoid it, they learnt all the tricks of the trade. And there was one thing if you were an officer, couldn't blankly, you know, say, "You ten

03:00 have been playing up," see. You had to charge one or two of them, you had to lay a charge, you couldn't, and so they used to try this on this poor old CO and he had lights out at a special time, half past nine or 10 o'clock you see. And so they'd get three huts in line and they would light one up and then put the light out and light another one up so,

03:30 and then he wouldn't know which hut to charge, and then when he did charge them they'd say that under act so and so , so and so that he had to charge the individuals. And, but it was quite a circus I believe.

So you were in Sale for what, five months?

Five or six months, yes.

So what was the bulk of the work you were doing there?

04:00 Oh, we had workshops there and they were very good, and you know, all concrete and pits for the, to get down and you could look under the cars. And any rate, the sergeant came down one day and, or he, at night, there wasn't much doing, one night, of course sometimes it'd be very busy and other times there wouldn't' be much doing. And one night he came down and told them to wash them down with petrol, you see.

04:30 Wash the floor down with petrol and then he said he'd show them how to fix it, he'd been up at there, up at the sergeants' mess too long and he threw a match in and he nearly took the roof off. And one, and another speciality of his was there, had a big long bench, that was, it had a metal top on it and so he'd connect this thing to the spark

05:00 plug testing machine, and then when smoko, he'd put a billy of hot tea on it and turn the spark plug machine on and anybody that came in he'd say to them, "Oh help yourself, get some tea." And there were great fun and games went on there.

So for you too.

05:30 **It was in ’44 that you brought the land in Inverloch, ’43?**

’43, it was ’43 that I bought the land in Inverloch. Oh one of the things that happened there, one of the WAAAFs, of course we had WAAAFs there in Sale. And one of them was a driver and she was driving the Salvation Army car, see they used to go all around the place and

06:00 delivering good things to the troops, and so she came in and she said, “Oh, my car’s smoking.” You see and so I was told to go and see what’s wrong with her car. And I pulled the dip stick out and there was oil right up to the top of it and I said to her, “Cath, what have you been,

06:30 have you had the engine boiling and put cold water in it?” And she said, “No, I haven’t done that.” And I said, “The oil is right up to the top of the dipstick.” And she said, “Oh well, they told us in the course, that if you dipped the oil and it was black to put more oil in it.” And so she had the sump full up to the pistons.

07:00 **So, sorry, was there more about, I wanted to ask you about buying the property in ’43. Did you have a sense that the war was going to, you know…?**

No, it was just that I was interested in that sort of land and we’d been and looked at land

07:30 at the South Gippsland, it was actually the principal of the School of Mines that told me about land that was up at Keith in South Australia, that could be bought for half a crown an acre and would grow lucerne, you see. And the chap that ran the hotel, the principal had stayed at the Keith Hotel one night and had told him all about this, I used to go and see him occasionally.

08:00 And so it took me about six months to persuade my uncles to go and see this land that could be bought for half a crown an acre and could grow lucre. And by the time we got up there the pub had changed hands and the new publican didn’t know anything about it, and my uncle saw this country was scrub on them about this height and they said that’ll never grow lucre, but they lived long enough to see good lucre growing there. And then my younger uncle,

08:30 he and I used to go and have a look at country and we went down to Mount Gambier and saw some country down there, and the stock down there was crook, and the country looked bad, and we didn’t have anything to do with that. And then there was a chappie that his people used to, Dave Allan, his people had migrated to the Dean and Newland area,

09:00 to Leongatha, and he was school teaching and he took on a school up in the area, and he had relations up there. And talking to him one time and he said, “Oh the country south of Leongatha, that’s similar to what you fellows have been looking at.” So we went down there and had a look around and were offered a place down there, and then we found out that it had been sold about three months before,

09:30 and the old agent that took us around, he didn’t know. Another time we went down and got bogged and then the war came on, and so I gave that idea away. And then when we used to stay with Harv Anderson who was at Inverloch, he had a place near Inverloch, and it was he that

10:00 had sooled the Australian Estates onto us, that was how we helped to, got looking at this place. And then, it was a chappie that I knew very well, and I met him one day and he said to me, “Did you buy that place, The Cliffs at Inverloch?” And I said, “Yes.” And he said, “Oh, I had a look at that,” he said, “But the rabbits frightened me.” And I said, “We didn’t see any the day we were there.”

10:30 The rabbits were all underground, but then we found out that the rabbits were terrible and at the end of the war, or towards the end of the war, rabbits had got to be a terrible pest all over the country. Because there were no young people to do anything, and so Bill Huntly was down there before, permanently before I was

11:00 and Bill got, somebody had told him that singas was a good thing, so we bought half a ton of singas powder and put it down the burrows and then we found out that singas was no good in sandy country and I don’t think it even gave the rabbits a headache. And then after, you see, when I’ve got, when I came back from the northern territory, the second time

11:30 and down to Inverloch, and then somebody said to me that I could apply for, to go onto the reserve. By this time the Japs were being, the end of ’44 they were getting well pushed back and so I put in papers and I finished the war, last 12 months of the war on the reserve. And

12:00 so I was living down there, and while this other chap, while Tom Winall was there, he said, “Now look, there are Italian POWs [prisoner of war] up Leongatha way. There was a camp up there somewhere and you can get them to work on the farm.” And he said, “I could do with some help without you fellows not here.” So I said, “Alright, well get one,

12:30 you see if you can handle him.” So he got one, and this chap that we got was an Italian from the north of Italy and he was from a farm and he could have run the place. And he was good, and Tom said, “Oh, I could do with another one like Rolly.” And so I said, “Well if you can handle him you better see if you can get another one.” So he got

13:00 another one and they sent him a little fellow from the south of Italy, and when Rolly saw him he was going to go back to the camp, Tom had a lot of talking to do to get him to stay. And they stayed there,

and then, after I left the air force, I was living in a caravan that Harv Anderson had on the end,

13:30 spent a fair amount of time with my sister and brother in law, and that. And Tom got appendicitis and so I said to him, “Oh look, you and your wife had better go away for a fortnight or three weeks after you’ve finished with the appendicitis, and I’ll look after the POW’s.” So

14:00 I was looking after the two POW’s and they were quite characters to yarn to at night, you know.

They were POWs from what, being caught in North Africa had they?

Yes, they’d been caught in North Africa. Of course, there were a lot of them sent out here to Australia, and there was, some of, there was one a friend of mine

14:30 got to know after the war, so he said to this chap, you know, “How did you become a POW, what did you do?” And he said, “Oh, I was a parachute.” You know, he used to jump out, and this chap had been a navigator in a Lancaster and

15:00 he said, “Oh, a brave man to jump out and pull the shiny handle.” He says he didn’t fancy that job, and so this chap said, “I not jump.” He said, “They push.” And so he said, “Then they muster him in a different mustering.” And he said, “It took them a long time to work it out but he was mustered then as a commando.” You see, and so Merrick said to him,

15:30 “You know, a parachute man and then a commando,” he said. “How did you become a commando?” He said, “First opportunity put hands up.” That was, and then he, he was quite a character, and he came out, he was sent back to Italy of course, after the end of the war.

16:00 And he was back into Australia as quick as he could and bought a farm, and he was near Merrick Holgate who had been in the air force. It was Merrick who had a lot do with him because he used to get this fellow to give him a hand and they used to help each other, and Merrick used to help him with the bookwork and that sort of thing.

Do you know of many Italian POWs that came back?

Yes, he was back

16:30 after the war, he got back as soon, as quick as he could. I met a chap here one day, and getting the tram I’m talking to him and he said, I asked him where he came from and he said from Germany, I said, “Oh were you in Germany when our mob were trying to flatten the place?” And he said, “Well not really,” he said, “I was 19 when the war broke out and the submarines were doing extra well so I joined the submarine corps.” And he said, “The first trip out, we

17:00 were off the coast of Ireland and somebody dropped a bomb down close to us, and I became a POW and was eventually sent over to Canada.” So he said, “I spent all the war working on a farm in Canada,” And he said, “When the war was over they sent me back to Germany, so I put in an application to go to go to Canada but,” he said, “I was too late, and I came to Australia,” he said. “I better deal with those that went back to Canada.”

17:30 And that was what happened during the war, if you were lucky.

Had there ever been, was there an opportunity where you might have been sent overseas, was that ever a possibility?

No, I never… People that I was with went up through New Guinea and up through the islands when they were shifting the Japs back up through there.

18:00 So, but you see I was down in Sale when a lot of them went up, started to go up through there. And, on the big engineering place, I went to the second time I was up in the Territory, well it was, there wasn’t that much for them to do. And they, the CO, poor old Splash,

18:30 he said that everything had to be done according to the book, you see. And according to the book you had to test the ball races you see. Well test the ball race, and a ball race can get out of kilter a little bit but crikey they could go for years. So they did what Splash told them but they finished up with all the trucks with no wheels on.

19:00 Then first of all, how he fell out with the WO, the fellow that told me to apply, I think he was doing that to get onto Splash really. Because he, first of all they were ordered back because of, for disciplinary reasons,

19:30 because the machinery, the trucks and the planes weren’t being fixed. Or mainly the trucks I think, and so they had to, they used to have to go by bus from the workshop to the living quarters. They had it sorted out so that living quarters were well away from the workshops, and instead of getting on the buses at tea, to go back after tea, which Splash told them to do,

20:00 they ran around and around these trucks going ho, ho, ho. And then he was terribly annoyed with them and he called the NCOs up, and wanted them to name 12 people that were responsible for this riot. And so this WO and Splash had fallen out before, and so he said to the WO, to the Splash, you know, “Do you really want to know who we think is

20:30 responsible?" And he said, "Yes." And he said, "Well I, with respect, I think that you were." So he and Splash weren't on the best of terms.

Is that just a personality thing, or what?

Yes, it was just, well, you know, it was silly things that he was insisting that

21:00 things that were impractical be done. See the air force law said they had to, the ball races had to do a certain thing, and of course a ball race would be alright, didn't add up to that but they turfed them out before.

What was the worst disciplining you ever received?

21:30 First disciplining?

Or the worst, the wort sort of, in terms of discipline, of punishment. Did you ever get into too much trouble, or you did obviously, but…?

I don't think I ever got into any much trouble and I suppose the worst that we saw was the fellows that were selling the revolvers, but it served them right, so, selling the revolvers to

22:00 the Yanks. But otherwise we got on fairly well with the authorities. And we were fortunate that, that all the time that I was up there that none of our fellows were injured by the Japs' raids there. A lot of them fell into the bush where there was nobody, and they were up that high

22:30 that they, of course the first day that they were there, they swooped in and knew there was nothing there, but when things got a bit more active, they stayed up that. There were that many, you know, if you were, looked, could see them from the slit trench, but you had a job to count them they were that high. I don't know what height they were but they were high.

So did the intensity of those raids diminish

23:00 **as time went on?**

Oh yes, well once they got the fighters and that down the road, and the bombers, it was, the Japs didn't worry us a great deal then, but they used to come over occasionally.

What were your, in general, what were your living quarters like? You're talking about the tents back in 10 mile and barracks in…?

Oh yes,

23:30 well we had, at the 10 mile I think it was at the 10 mile, or either 10 mile or Rapid Creek, we had a roof of course, and just a sheet of masonite down so far and the rest of it was open, and the masonite had a notice on it to say that it was white ant free, so they used to eat the

24:00 notice off first and then start on the masonite. But they, I don't know whether they ate the hole in the tin or what they did but they let the oil out of four gallon tins. But they were in cases, and I think that they probably ate the cases and must have left acid behind

24:30 and the acid made holes in the bottom of the tins. By the time they went to get these tins of, four gallon tins of oil they were empty, the white ants let them all out.

So how long were you in the Territory the second time around, after Sale?

Oh, I wasn't up there, I was only up there for about a month, or five or six weeks, I think.

And how did that

25:00 **camp differ from where you had been previously?**

Oh crikey, it had everything. It had all the tools and it had lanes and milling machines. And that was another thing they did to poor old Splash, he eventually got them back to work one night, and they, somebody said, "One,

25:30 **two, three!" And they all pressed the start button and blew all the fuses in the camp, and of course they had electricity everywhere, we had no electricity, it was, we salvaged it in petrol lamps, I don't know where they came from but they came home. I don't know where they got them from.**

Were you close to the drome, was that part of the drome there?

26:00 At 10 mile no, the drome would, the old drome would have been about four or five miles away from us, I suppose. We were 10 miles from the post office I think.

You said earlier that you joined the air force thinking that you'd be able to get your hands on the planes and muck around with them. Did you ever get to see the guts of a plane?

No, didn't even get to look at them

26:30 unless they were flying. No, I was never, I was never even in the, you see there were transport workshops connected with the various squadrons, but I was never with them. But we didn't seem to have any planes. I suppose all our officers were administrative characters, but there was one chap, he was the aerodrome

27:00 defence officer and he had a great idea that the Japs didn't come down low enough for the ack ack to get them you see. So they had some planes that were there that were just fakes, you see, so he had a great idea that they would get one of these fake planes, put it on the runway and have

27:30 a robot on it and a fellow on a motorbike to tow the plane down the runway. And then that'd bring the Japs down you see, after this plane, and the ack ack would get them you see, but he couldn't get anybody to volunteer to drive the motorbike. And the same chap decided that we should have an area

28:00 that if there was an attack when we were there the air force were to evacuate you see, so we were to have a trial evacuation. So he got this all organised, how this trial evacuation would work, and then he got the navy to call the time and the navy were to call the time, so when the time came, you know, the…

28:30 We'd already gone to bed I think, and the call, and of course, the evacuation started and the trucks all had to be filled up with various people. And I had the last truck on the line, and there was nobody in my truck so when we went around the corner, I went home to bed. And never found out, he never found out that

29:00 I'd gone home to bed. But the next day he had a young chap, Jimmy Sitters, and Jimmy, he was only 19, and at that time, he must have been 18 when he enlisted, and he was always, he was a driver and spent a whole lot of his time being in trouble, with him doing something. And they put him on the rubbish cart,

29:30 and when he was on the rubbish he had two labourers, I don't know where they got them from, and he would tell them all sorts of stories, you see, about how he'd been… And he told them one great story one time about how he'd been with the, I don't know whether it was the CO or the adjutant, the day before, and that he'd been told that there were 200 ships, 100 miles,

30:00 no there were 100 ships, 200 miles away, coming our way you see, but not to tell anybody. And of course it got around the territory they were 100 miles away. And there was one crowd, running a radar station, and they shifted it all into their truck and they had the truck all backed up by the cookhouse to throw the cookhouse on, and

30:30 I think they worked out of their truck for about a fortnight. So anyway, it was some time after this, Jimmy came home on a motorbike, oh looking as white as a ghost. I said, "What's the matter with you Jim?" "Oh," he said, "I've just heard that there are 200 ships and they're only 100 miles away." And he hadn't

31:00 recognised his own rumour. Any rate they finished up running him to court over it, he got into a bit of trouble over that. Jimmy's own rumour, he got the fright of his life over his own rumour. But he was driving this air force

31:30 officer, after the trial evacuation, and he said, "Oh wonderful success this was," he said, "Yesterday." He said, "Excepting those chaps with the flying boats," he said, "They didn't turn up." And then he said, "You know, it was a wonderful success." And Jimmy being what he was, he said, "Yes but

32:00 we went down the main road." He said, "And we're not allowed to go down the main road if there's an invasion, we've got to have, there's been an air force road surveyed." And he said, "Oh no, we shouldn't have," he said. And this was before lunch, and so he said, "I'll see you after lunch," he said. "And so," he said,

32:30 "I'll get you tomorrow. Do you know where this air force road is?" And so he came back after lunch and he said to Sitters, "Oh yes, there is that air force road, I believe, air force evacuation road." And he said, "Do you know where it is Sitters?" And he said, "Yes, I know where it is." And he said, "Well, I'll get you tomorrow and we'll go down it." And he said, "No we won't," he said, "It's under water."

33:00 That was how we won the war.

Sounds like you had a great war really.

Oh yes, it was a great, I often think war's a great thing if nobody gets hurt, but too many people get hurt with war.

Earlier you talked about, I think you said you received something like 270 letters.

33:30 **Who were the letters coming from and how often would you write yourself?**

Oh they were mostly from my relations. Various relations that, we were a fairly tightly knit clan. And there were a number of cakes and there was a, at Christmas time, we got a, everybody got a hamper.

34:00 It was organised and mine came from people that I had the address of and I wrote to them, and of course I never heard any more of them, and I think I still have their name. And then the Comforts Fund, they used to send up things, too, usually soap and toothpaste and tobacco.

34:30 And, seeing as I didn't drink or smoke, I could trade the tobacco, or give it away.

So how many of the fellows would have drank and smoked?

Oh, most of them did, there weren't many of us that were teetotallers, they mostly drank and smoked.

So did they give you a hard time?

Only once, when I went up the second time. I'd

35:00 just got to the camp and I ran into a chap that I knew from Sale. And he said, "Oh look, I'll see you after lunch." And so after lunch he came and said, "Oh look, there's a spare bunk in our place and would you like it." And I said, "Oh a spare bunk, that'll do me." So I went there, there were three of them in the place, were up for four,

35:30 and there were three of them in there, and that night was beer night, you see, and so these other two characters they pestered the life out of me to have a drink of their beer, you see. And kept at me and at me, and so I said, "Well just a little drop." You see, and they said, "George told us that you were a teetotaller and you're here under false pretences."

36:00 And they were the sort of things that went on you know, in the camps all the time, it was a tremendous lot of fun.

What about gambling?

Oh, and there was a, one of our chaps at the 10 mile, he used to go off somewhere playing two up, you see. And he had a system,

36:30 that you started off, you put sixpence on, and if you lost you put a shilling on, and if you lost that you put two shillings on you see. And you doubled up every time if you lost. And then if, when you won, the only profit you got was your sixpence that you started with, and so he was telling us about this great scheme you see, so I said to him, "Well, why don't you get a mate

37:00 and you back heads and he backs tails, you see, and if you run out of money you can always borrow it off your mate." You see. So they set this up and I got rubbed off the two up school.

But you weren't a gambling man yourself?

37:30 No, I've been farming all my life, that's a big enough gamble without risking your money on anything else.

Gilbert can you tell us, I think you may have told us previously, a bit about how your time in the air force there, ended?

How?

How you left?

38:00 How I came home? Well I came home because I'd challenged old Splash with redress of grievance, and they landed me, put me on a plane and sent me home very smartly. I must have been a troublemaker I suppose, but it was the WO that was, that was behind it. I was quite prepared to take whatever they said, but all I wanted to know

38:30 was whether I was to get the leave, or whether I was to get in touch with them to tell them I wouldn't be home. And, but that was, but then when I came home, I was then told that I could apply to go on the reserve, and so I did that, because I didn't think that we were doing a great deal of good where we were.

39:00 **But had you been conscious during your whole, during the air force, that you were doing your bit for the war?**

Oh well, we were there, at any rate, we were there to do what we were told to do, and when you're in Darwin, we reckoned that there was a chance of the Japs coming any time, and that it was very, and there was a lot going on, you see. We not only had the

39:30 Americans came in there, and that made a big difference to things. And there was a Dutch squadron there too, Queen Wilhelmina's Dutch squadron, but they came from Indonesia, what Indonesia used to be, Dutch East Indies. But they had Mitchell planes, they were good American planes, and

40:00 they went out on 11 raids. Oh, first of all they said that a tail gunner was too dangerous for Dutchmen, so could they have Australians, so they gave the Australian rear gunners, and then they went out on 11 raids and brought their bombs back. And you know,

40:30 they didn't get to the target. So they said, "Right, we'll not only give you rear gunners but we'll give you navigators." And took all the side arms off the rest of the crew, and they never brought any bombs back after that.

Tape 8

00:33 **So let's talk about, you've come back from Darwin, you're on the reserves now, tell us some stories.**

Then we, of course one of the main troubles with the country was that it was overrun with rabbits, it was lousy with rabbits, and I rode a pony up one paddock one day, and the, early in the morning, and the rabbits just went

01:00 at it like a bow wave, they were that bad. And a chappie that I had there, Jim Taylor, after I'd been there two or three years I suppose, before Jim came with me, he had a pea rifle and he went up to one place and he stood in the one place and shot six rabbits in the one place, never moved.

01:30 So we tried the singas and it was no good, because most of the burrows were in sandy country, where the digging was good. And then we bought a carrot, oh when I was down at Sale, I went past a chemist shop one day and he had strychnine in the window.

02:00 And so I went in and said, "Oh, can I buy some strychnine?" And he said, "How much do you want?" And I finished up buying a carton of strychnine. And we brought that back, and there was a, I think it was after I'd left the air force, that there was a chap, was an expert, he was with the lands department, he was an expert on poisoning rabbits.

02:30 And we got carrots and he condemned these carrots that they weren't good enough for rabbits. Any rate, you had to give them a feed of carrots, a couple of feeds of carrots and then poison the carrots, and then you had to make sure your stock weren't in the, could get in the paddocks, and our fences weren't too good and poisoning with strychnine wasn't a great success. And

03:00 there was a chap doing a lot of rabbit trapping on the place, and he was complaining about the foxes and I said, "Oh, would you like a bottle of strychnine?" So I gave him one of these bottles of strychnine that I had, there was about half a dozen I think in the bottle, in the packet, and gave one of these bottles. And saw him a few days afterwards, and he said, "I think you can eat that strychnine of yours," he said. "I poisoned rabbits with it, but I've never

03:30 seen a dead fox, so I think your strychnine it was Indian strychnine. I think it must have been Epsom salts or something instead. Any rate, the strychnine poisoning wasn't a thing at any rate. So then when the war finished, there was, singas was, no, larvicide was released. Now this larvicide was a liquid

04:00 and it was a thing, it was a, it was a sort of a mild gas like they used in the First World War, and it, you had it in an oil can and you put two or three squirts down the rabbit burrow, and fill the burrows in and it laid the rabbits out like nobody's business. But there was a big gully through the place,

04:30 and you'd, we'd have a couple of dogs with us to round the rabbits up, and Jim Taylor and I were at this for about a fortnight, with this larvicide, had a good quantity of it, and if you did a burrow up the top of the gully, the dogs would hunt one down the bottom you see, you'd go down there. And for a finish up

05:00 at the end of the fortnight, Jim and I and the two dogs were really had it, we had, you know, we'd got a real dose of this larvicide. And we were coughing and spluttering and carrying on, we were both still going, but the dogs were both dead. And then there were no rabbits on the place for about a fortnight and then they all come

05:30 in out of the neighbours. So this was, and then at the end of the war, Dame Jean McNamara had been , or before the war, a good number of years before the war, Jean McNamara had graduated in medicine and she went overseas, and she was down in South America,

06:00 and there was, the people down there were complaining that their rabbits were dying like flies because there was some terrible thing, myxomatosis was killing these rabbits like nothing, like nobody's business. And her father was a magistrate who spent a number of, a fair part of his time fining farmers for having rabbits on their property, and I suppose he'd say well, the poor beggars, they couldn't get rid

06:30 of them but it was the law that he had to fine them, and so that was the way it was. And so she was sympathetic of farmers with rabbits, and so she got some of this myxomatosis, and sent it to her boyfriend who was Dr Connor, and the customs people threw it into their incinerator. And so Jean McNamara wasn't at all pleased about that, and so when she went from

07:00 South America, she went to England and when she got to England she went to Australia House to complain about this and she ran into Stan Bruce, who had been the Prime Minister of Australia. And it was not long before the war, or it was during the depression, it was during the depression that Jimmy Scullin

07:30 had sent him over, persuaded him to go to London to see what he could do about the finance, after having taken his job. And so he said well, it was his government that started the CSIRO. And he said, "I'll get that stuff into Australia." And so between he and Dame Jean they got it in and CSIRO they had it.

08:00 They became CSIRO later on, but they bred some up, and then they sent a chap down onto an island in Bass Strait, where this island had a lot of rabbits on it, and he went down with this myxomatosis. He was down there for two years and he came to the conclusion that it wouldn't spread because the rabbits were a cliquey mob and the ones in one warren wouldn't

08:30 take it to another warren. And he wrote a report that it was, you know, no good out here in Australia. And I had copy of that report at one stage, but I seem to have lost it. And he also, he was fairly enterprising chap and took one jaw off a rabbit trap and soldered two hypodermic needles

09:00 to the other jaw so when the rabbit stood on the plate, it got a shot of myxomatosis in the ribs. But it did no good, they, the CSIRO gave it up and they invented 10-80, which was another poison which wasn't, which wasn't a great success for getting rid of the rabbits and that at the end of the war.

09:30 Dame Jean, she was named Jean by this time I think, she met up with some people, that was told them that she reckoned that the myxomatosis was still the right thing to get rid of the rabbits. And they persuaded her to give lectures at the graziers association and the farmers union which was before the VFF [Victorian Farmers Federation]

10:00 and the farmers got excited about this, and got onto their members of parliament and the members of parliament got onto the politicians. And the politicians finished up getting onto the CSIRO and they said, "Oh we sent this, it was no good, but we'll try it again." And so they took it up to the upper Murray, and it wasn't much good up there, and so they thought they were getting a bit of a hiding about it, so

10:30 they went to an island, between, in the Murray, that's between Echuca and Swan Hill. And they set to the rabbits there and the next thing there were people saying that the rabbits were dying like flies up along the Darling, and then they realised that there were, the mosquitoes, they found out then that the mosquitoes had carried the virus. And before

11:00 they went some people were saying you know, this myxomatosis is a terrible thing and it might do this and it might do that and might get to the human beings. And Clunies Ross was head of the CSIRO, and he and two other chaps injected themselves with myxomatosis to prove that it was, how it wouldn't affect human beings. And then

11:30 they said, "Oh, it's too dangerous a stuff for farmers to use that. The only people that could use it were the lands department." And so they said that we were to catch rabbits but we weren't to trap them, and we were to keep them in a cage and we were to get two or three rabbits each farmer, and then the department would inoculate them.

12:00 So we finished up with three or four rabbits each in a wire cage, feeding these rabbits until the day came, and it was a beautiful sunny day, and there were 200 farmers turned up with rabbits at the court house at Wonthaggi, and then you had to put your rabbits back into the wire cage and keep them until they developed the myxomatosis.

12:30 Well there was only one farmer's rabbits that developed the myxomatosis out of the 200. And he was the chap that was there first and what had happened was, that they'd inoculated… So they were, there was only the one chap's rabbits and they found out that

13:00 he was the first man to be inoculated, and that the beautiful sunny day had killed all the rabbit, the virus. And so, fortunately for us, Dame Jean and her husband, Dr Connor, had bought a property at Leongatha South, and so, and Harv Anderson knew them,

13:30 and so Dame Jean, he got in touch with Dame Jean and told her this terrible, what had happened. And so she said, "You get some more rabbits, and I'll bring you down some myxo and I'll guarantee that it'll work." So she brought some vials down in a thermos flask. And, crikeys it knocked the rabbits, you know, and it didn't matter if your neighbour didn't do it, because the mosquitoes

14:00 carried it. And then she told me, told some of us that there were only two varieties of mosquitoes that would carry it and that they only were about in the summer time, and that if the rabbits were in places where water dried up there wouldn't be any mosquitoes. And so she

14:30 advocated that we provide water handy so that the mosquitoes would breed where the rabbits were. So I thought this was a good idea, and so I got drums like this, we used to have empty drums with poison and all sorts of things in them, and washed them out and drilled holes in the side of them and filled them with water and put them with the rabbit burrows, where country was, you know, where there

15:00 is no water up in Horsham. Then, I thought it was such a good idea that I exhibited it at the inventors, at both the Melbourne Show and the Woomera's field days. And Jack Valance was one of the judges, and he really took me to pieces for breeding mosquitoes, he'd had mosquitoes. So

15:30 that was cleaning out the rabbits. And now, then people used to say, oh the myxo hasn't, you know, the rabbits have got immune to it, but people will say, oh the rabbits are building up here again. And in the winter time they would but in the summer time if there's any water about they'll get thinned out again,

16:00 and I've seen this happen at Inverloch and at Nurrabiel. And that providing there's water about the mosquitoes, and they are little teeny mosquitoes that do it, they will go through fly wire. But there's only two varieties of mosquitoes that will do it.

So once you'd dealt with the rabbits, the farm moved along in leaps and bounds did it?

16:30 Oh, a lot of them died in their burrows and so that was, but it made a tremendous difference. I reckon that if it hadn't have been for the myxomatosis I'd have gone broke, I think, gone broke. I'd have been in the same trouble as my ancestors with the mining.

So what was the stock that you had there?

Stock? Oh sheep and cattle, and I tried to farm it like you would at Dean, and I

17:00 planted a paddock of oats, I thought I'd try the oats for a start. And they were fairly hardy and I stooped that paddock three times, it was blown over with storms, and so I gave that away and just concentrated on grass, and so it, and then I was, I'd done wool classing and one thing and another. And

17:30 we'd been rearing fat lambs at Dean and so I got into the sheep in a big way and a few cattle but the sheep would get footrot, 40 inch rainfall was too much for sheep. There was a chap told me years before, that you didn't want any more than 24 inches of rain for sheep. And I proved it down there, I put in 20 years down there,

18:00 and at one stage, I don't know whether I've told you, but at one stage, I was financing the purchase of more sheep and the bank manager told me that the country I'd taken was unfit for settlement. Now the people that have, there are two people that have the most of this country at present, and the one is

18:30 concentrating on fattening cattle on the country, and he bought some other country to breed cattle to fatten at Inverloch. And the other paddock further out to Cape Patterson was fairly sand, were very sandy country, and that the chappie that now is running stud cattle on it and I was there.

19:00 last Christmas time, he took and I met up with him and he took me to see the place, and he'd harvested maize 12 feet high. But the secret of it was that Inverloch had been sewered and they'd bought the property next door which we sort of went around, and put a dam there to purify the water.

19:30 I don't know that they done much to it. And then they were going to run it out to the sea, past Cape Patterson. And it was going through his paddocks and there as an unmade road and it had a lot of the native scrub on it and so he said, "Oh look, don't run it through that road, put the pipe in my paddock." And they said, "What do you want?" And he said, "Oh I don't want much," he said. "Just leave me a couple of taps."

20:00 And so when I was there he had a megalitre dam and was making a two megalitre dam, and he was, he'd been irrigating this maize with this good stuff, from where I couldn't grow oats, he could grow, he could grow maize. And he's got a big lot of maize in again this year and

20:30 it's, you know, what that country's doing. Well then there was another paddock that joined that, that my brother in law had, and he left the district too and he sold it to my cousin's, to my wife's cousin and he,

21:00 to one about the same age as my wife, and his father said, "Oh," he said, "That paddock was never any good." 640 acres. Because he knew the country, and so, Dick now was telling me that he'd cut it up into eight 80 acre paddocks and there were people growing green peas on it and it's doing very well.

21:30 Growing green peas and then sowing them down, and it was as good a paddock as he had anywhere. It was just, you know, what can be done with the different crops. You see, if I'd have, you see they have these storms early in the year, early in the summer, and then they seem to have a dry time in the autumn, and of course, if you plan to plant

22:00 things that you harvested in the autumn you were a lot better off. But I tried to do them the same as we'd done in Dean and it was just a failure. But these people are doing a great job and it's a great thing to go down there and see what they are doing with country that was… And I told Bruce Gibson that the bank had told me that the country I had taken up was unfit for settlement, and he said, "You know, bank managers don't know everything."

22:30 But I knew that his dad was a bank manager.

So that year before the end of the war, in '44, '45, what did being with the air force reserves mean, did you still have to do a…?

No, I was just on there to be called up. They could have called me up anytime if I had have been wanted.

So had you already been discharged?

23:00 No, no I wasn't discharged until after the end of the war. So I was still an air force officer, an air force corporal until the end of the war. But I could have been called anytime they wanted somebody. But I suppose they didn't want a fellow that would cause so much trouble. They didn't know it was the WO, not me, that caused all the trouble.

23:30 That I've advocated that that sort of thing shouldn't go on in the public service ever since.

Well it sounds like you were very busy that year, but do you actually recall when war actually ended, I mean, first, VE day [Victory in Europe] and then VJ [Victory over Japan] day? Did your community pay much heed, was there much celebrating?

Oh, I don't know that there was great deal of

24:00 celebrations, you know, out in the country where I was. And I don't remember there was as much then as there was when I was at the school when armistice was signed.

You remember that?

Oh yes, I was at the Middle Park school when armistice was signed.

Because you mentioned it earlier but can you…?

1918, 11th of November, 1918 I was…

24:30 I'd have been coming up eight you see. I'd have been eight at the end of November.

And what do you remember of that day?

Oh, they had great celebrations and then in the morning it was declared a holiday, and then in the afternoon, and it was a great day. And so one of the chaps up in Dean, he said to me,

25:00 he was a bit younger than I was, and he remembered it up there, and he said that they, that my uncle, one of my uncles had been at the Boer War, and so he gave them a great stirring address at the, when armistice was signed.

Do you have any memories of post World War I with

25:30 **the ex soldiers coming back?**

Coming back, well you see I was eight when they came back, some of them didn't get back until 1919 or well onto 1919. I had my mother's youngest, my mother's eldest brother was, he was lost over in the Boer War. But he got,

26:00 they got typhoid fever up there and he died of the fever. And then her youngest brother went to the First World War, went to the First World War and he'd only turned 18, I think, not long before the war finished. But he was there and he was in the army medical corps, you know, he was the offsider to the

26:30 army to the doctors. And they had a great welcome home, to him, he's my mother, and his father and mother were still alive when he came home, and an uncle and an elder brother. And then my aunt's brother,

27:00 he came home too, and of course we were, that celebration too. There were great celebrations when these fellows came back. But a lot of them had hard times, they got, you know, my auntie's brother, he started up, he'd been in the theatre, and he started up a music shop.

27:30 But I don't think it did very well, the depression, the depression finished him and there was another chap, that I knew by, my mother's bridesmaid. Her husband, he was, he took on a store down at, down on the Kooweerup swamp. Nearly all soldiers settlement, and between the,

28:00 you know, the depression and the farmers debt adjustment it didn't do him any good at all. And there were a lot of chappies that came back from the First World War, and the thing that always stuck in my mind was that these chaps had just come back from the war, used to say they'd sooner trust the fruits, to the frogs, any day of the week.

28:30 I don't know what they had against the frogs, but you know, I was only a boy of about eight or nine, and this sort of stuck in my mind a bit, that these fellows had been over there fighting the Germans and they'd sooner have them than the frogs. But of course, they used to go on leave in, you know, those that were in France, they could go back to Paris on leave.

29:00 And one of my cousins, she, oh it was her father was, and he, and his brother was killed there, and she went over there to France, and they were being a bit uppity and so she took to them and said, she said, "I've got an uncle buried over here defending your country."

29:30 When she'd had enough of them.

Do you want to tell us a little bit about how you met your wife?

Oh well, when I came down to Inverloch the Scott family had originally been to, been up in Creswick. And

30:00 that we always knew that the Scotts were down at, down near Inverloch, down near Wonthaggi, not Wonthaggi, near Leongatha, Landown, and the day that we took delivery of the farm down here, there was a clearing sale and I happened to get leave to go to

30:30 this clearing sale, and that two of the Scotts met some of my uncles, my uncle and my mother were there, and then they met some of the Scott family, and were, of course, then we were friendly with the family from then on. And then after we'd built a new house down here,

31:00 we'd been 10 or 15 years on the place I suppose, yes it must have been because it was 20 years, we were there 20 years, it was five years before we'd have built the new house. And we had a great turn out, at Easter time, a lot of the folk came down from the Ballarat district, and the Scotts came there and we had a great party at the house.

31:30 And one of my cousins was talking to Mr Scott, to Fred Scott and found out that his father and Uncle Fred Scott had been to, my uncle and Fred Scott had been to the Creswick Grammar school together. And then I met up with Jean, she had been,

32:00 during the war, she had been in the censorship. And as I was saying to her one day, I remember saying to her one day, "You know, the officers had to censor our mail, but they weren't allowed to comment on it." And they weren't allowed, weren't supposed to, they were supposed to fold the paper in half,

32:30 and read it like that, you see, so that they didn't, they weren't to get the sense out of it, but I doubt whether they all did as they were told to do. And a good thing, if anything was, you know, that you reckoned wanted fixing, and you'd probably get into trouble for trying to get it done. Officially, if you wrote it in your letter, and you know, if there was anything

33:00 that you thought that should be altered, and Jean told me that that was one thing they had to look for in letters, was complaints like that. So that the authorities could do something about it, so that was one thing.

We're very nearly at the end of this tape, so I'm just wondering how you…?

I'll tell you the societies that I belong to.

33:30 **Yeah, just to wrap up we'll hear that.**

Yes, well I've been a great fellow for joining various societies, and the first one I joined was the Agricultural Society of Victoria, and they were building a grandstand and they reduced the price of a life member's ticket, and I, it was reduced to 20 pounds and I'd won seven

34:00 pounds in a student judging competition. We used to judge everything from Clydesdales to WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. The young people that were exhibiting animals at the show, that was the first thing I judged and then there was somebody, there was a meeting one time at the showgrounds, or it was called Melbourne Showtime, and I was down at Inverloch. And it was

34:30 to form a company called a grassland society, and I met a chap from Ballarat, Max Troop, and he said, "Oh this looks like a good thing." That the idea was farmers to meet academics and research people, and people interested in industry from the other sides. And that there was nothing like it in Victoria

35:00 at the time, and Max said, "There will be, somebody will want to make it fairly tight and what can we do about it?" And we put a lot of thought into this and I said to him, one day we were talking about it, and I said, "There was some fellow in the old testament that, all flesh is grass, and if the grass withers, the flesh fades." And Max said, "Who said that?" And I said, "I'm blowed if I know." And I went to the British and foreign bible society and

35:30 they said, "Oh that was the prophet Isaiah." And so when they, we went to the meeting when they were going to form this society, and they, somebody moved that they should form this society, and then they got arguing the point as to how wide or narrow it ought to be. And Max gave me a dig in the ribs and he said, "Right." So I got up and I said, "Perhaps we could be guided what the prophet Isaiah said." And that's

36:00 where they left it and left it wide open, and it's been wide open every since. And every now and again I've got to defend the prophet Isaiah. And then that was the second, and then I joined the Wimmera machinery field days where we were, up there. And at that time my heart used to bolt, I think that I got a terrible dose of carbon dioxide one time,

36:30 and then if I got into some sort of stress that my heart would bolt, and it got to that stage that I was at, went to see the doctor one time about it, and he gave me some pills and he said, "Now take one of these every day." And so I said to him, he was a Walpole too, and so I said to him, "Now look if I only take them when it bolts,

37:00 will I go around the bend?" "No," he said, "You won't go around the bend." Now I haven't taken any of

those pills for three years. It's gradually, I was gradually able to go longer and longer without having to take them. And so I had to resign from the Wimmera machinery days, after a number of years as a committee member. And so they said

37:30 that they couldn't make me a life member, they'd make me an honorary member. So I'm a honorary member of that, they said they could always take the honorary membership off me at any rate. And then I belonged to the VFF. There used to be the Farmer's Union and the Graziers Association, and I belong to the Grazier Association, and the last meeting of the Graziers Association I objected to joining with the Farmers Union.

38:00 But I belonged to VFF ever since it was started, and I was elected the first president of the south wimmera branch. This is some time after it started, but I had to give that up too, on account of didn't have any (UNCLEAR) and I belonged to the animal production society. I met a chap last night I hadn't seen for 20 years

38:30 and he recognised me, and he knew me from the animal production society, it was at the royal society, and they used to be a very, you know, you had to be a professor or something to get in there, but I had belonged to the science club at the… and when they folded up, the Royal Society took us in so I got in the back door there, and the solar energy society.

39:00 And the hydrogen international society, an energy society, I'm a new member of an energy society now. And of course the RSL [Returned and Services League], and down at Inverloch, and I was president and treasurer, and my mate was the auditor.

39:30 There was one chap belonged to the RSL down there, and he and his brother came to Melbourne one day and they were going to go to a café in Russell Street, and there was a car taking up sort of three, two or three parking places, and so he asked this fellow if he would move his car up,

40:00 so they could get in behind him. And the fellow pulled a gun on him and told him to get the hell, and this fellow grabbed him, dragged him out through the window and when the police came to rescue him he was scrubbing his nose on the footpath. He'd been trained as a commando.

30 seconds left, parting words now.

40:30 Parting words, well it's been very good to have a talk with you people, and you'll realise that they realised that I had the gift of the gab.

Thank you for sharing that gift Gilbert.

INTERVIEW ENDS